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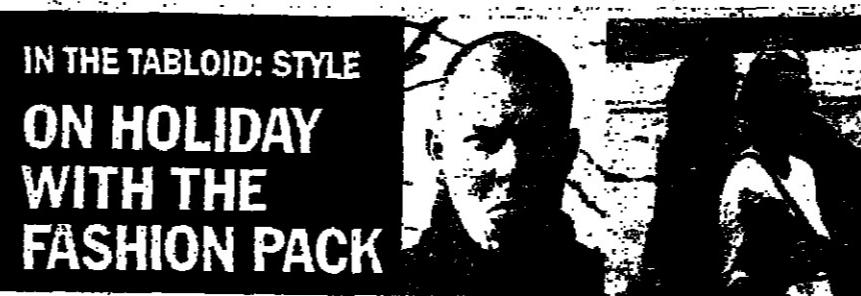
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IN THE TABLOID

THE PRINCESS AND THE PLAYBOY



IN THE TABLOID: STYLE
ON HOLIDAY WITH THE FASHION PACK



TABLOID PAGE 8

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Soccer stars cleared over match fixing charges

Michael Streeter

The football authorities last night announced a high-powered inquiry into betting and match forecasting in the game after a jury cleared four defendants, including footballers John Fashanu and Bruce Grobbelaar, of a conspiracy to fix Premier League matches.

As three of the accused walked free – Grobbelaar, the former Liverpool goalkeeper, still faces a separate match throwing charge – it was announced that the former Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir John Smith, had already started the urgent investigation.

David Davies, the Football Association's public affairs spokesman said: "Sir John will be reporting speedily – certainly within three months – to the chief executive."

The verdict – in a 45-day trial after another jury failed to agree earlier this year – had come as a huge relief for the football authorities after the match-fixing allegations had threatened to engulf the sport in its worst scandal this century.

The jury of six women and five men at Winchester Crown Court found Fashanu, 34, who used to play for Wimbledon, Grobbelaar, 39, ex-Wimbledon goalkeeper Hans Segers, 35, and Malaysian businessman Heng Suan Lim, 32, not guilty of conspiracy to give and accept corrupt payments to influence the results of football matches on behalf of a Far Eastern betting syndicate. The jury accepted the defendants' claims they were involved in match forecasting, not fixing.

It will continue its deliberations this morning on whether Grobbelaar is guilty of accepting £2,000 from his former business partner, Christopher Vincent, to fix matches for a separate – and fictional – syndicate.



Hans Segers and wife Astrid (top) celebrate yesterday. He was cleared of all charges in the match-fixing trial. Ex-Aston Villa player John Fashanu (above) kisses his wife, Melissa. Photographs: Mike Stephens/PA, Kieran Doherty/Reuters

The fourth mortgage rise under Labour

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Home-buyers face the fourth increase since the general election in the cost of mortgages after the Bank of England announced a quarter point increase in interest rates to 7 per cent yesterday.

Employers' organisations and trade unions spoke with one voice in condemning the Bank's move, saying that high interest rates were keeping the pound too strong and damaging industry.

This is the last thing Britain's exporters and their suppliers need at this time," said Ian Peters, of the British Chambers of Commerce, describing the decision as a "body-blow".

The foreign exchange and stock markets, however, responded positively to a strong hint in the statement from the Monetary Policy Committee that there would be no more interest rate rises in the near future. They fell sharply on the foreign exchanges, leading to a 10-pfennig drop against the German mark in two days.

The financial markets were delighted that the Bank had managed to trim the exchange rate, sending share prices leaping to another new record yesterday. The FTSE 100 index climbed 61 points to 5,086.8, and has gained 14 per cent since the election. "The Bank of England is to be commended for some pretty nifty footwork here," said Roger Bootle, chief economist at City of London bank HSBC Markets.

The Bank's statement yesterday said: "Upward pressure on the exchange rate should be reduced by the perception that

His shadow, Peter Lilley, said: "This fourth rate rise in 100 days is the inevitable result of Chancellor Gordon Brown's botched Budget." He said Mr Brown had "left the Bank with no option but to push interest rates higher."

Malcolm Bruce, Treasury spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, joined him in criticising the Budget. "Today's interest rate rise was probably necessary to avoid a damaging consumer boom followed by the usual bust, but it was also a sign that Gordon Brown got his Budget wrong," he said.

A Labour backbencher, Austin Mitchell, urged the Chancellor to reverse his "premature" decision to allow the Bank of England to set interest rates. He said its Monetary Policy Committee had "turned a complacent blind eye to Britain's slide into the third recession since 1979".

Interest rates have now risen by 1 per cent since 1 May. The Cheltenham & Gloucester, the fourth biggest lender, raised its mortgage rates straight away. Other big lenders, including the Halifax, Woolwich, Abbey National, Alliance & Leicester and Nationwide, said they would review the situation.

The Britannia increased its savings rates, but said its mortgage rates would not rise.

City delight, page 19

How a five-year-old boy ended up as the victim of one town's drug-fuelled amorality

Steve Boggan

He is five-year-old Dillon Hull, the youngest victim of Britain's spiralling descent into drug-fuelled amorality, a child so at risk that his stepfather tried to buy bullet-proof glass for his home just hours before a gunman fired two shots into the little boy's head.

As Dillon's neighbours in Deane, a once-prideful suburb of Bolton, Greater Manchester, tried to come to terms with their new membership of gangster land, details emerged yesterday of the adult forces that had conspired to end his young life.

Dillon died on Wednesday evening because he got in the way of a crash-heeled gunman apparently intent on settling a feud with his stepfather, John Bates, a 28-year-old with a record for possession who regularly came to the attention of police.

Armed officers were guarding Mr Bates at a secret location last night after witnesses came forward to say that he may know the identity of the man who killed Dillon and shot him in the stomach. His injuries are not life-threatening.

A firm of glaziers have told police that they were called on Wednesday

morning to replace a window at Mr Bates' home in Jauncey Street which had been damaged by gunfire in the early hours.

"He asked whether we could supply bullet-resistant glass but we said his window was too large, so we sent laminated glass, the strongest we had," said Alan Moores, manager of Express Glazing in Ashton-under-Lyne. "When my lads got there, Mr Bates showed them a bullet hole in his living room wall and said: 'I know who did this – and I'm going to get him.' My lads got the job done as quickly as they could and got the hell out of there."

Later that afternoon, shortly after 5pm, the gunman struck, shooting his victims in Bankfield Street in broad daylight. He then ran down an alley leaving a yellow Mini Metro behind.

Yesterday police said there was "no big drugs war in Bolton", but neighbours spoke of "rife" drug dealing in an area that used to be quiet and respectable.

In a clear sign that police may have been given a name by Mr Bates, Detective Superintendent Peter Ellis, the man leading the inquiry, said he had reason to believe the gunman was being harboured by other criminals and



Dillon Hull was a "friendly, sociable, intelligent child", said neighbours

he appealed for them to turn him in.

"Whatever activity or business these people are in, I would ask them: 'Where do you draw the line?' A five-year-old boy's life has been stolen away;

he has been brutally murdered on the streets of Bolton," he said. "Please call me in confidence and help me catch this killer."

Mr Ellis said the car driven by the

assailant and a crash-helmet he discarded at the scene were being examined by forensic scientists. The Metro had not been stolen, he said, but the previous owner had been eliminated from the inquiry. The car had changed hands seven times in recent weeks. Mr Ellis also revealed that closed-circuit television footage from nearby commercial premises was also being examined.

Neighbours described Dillon as a friendly, sociable and intelligent child, to whom his mother, Jane Hull – who gave birth to a baby boy three days ago – was devoted. Mr Ellis said Mr Bates was "known to police" and had been visited by officers on several occasions because of complaints by neighbours.

According to the *Manchester Evening News*, he had been convicted of possessing drugs and had been arrested more than once in connection with alleged intent to supply. Police refuse to discuss his anecdotes.

In spite of his turbulent life, Mr Bates comes from a respectable, wealthy family. His father, Johnny, is well known locally as the proprietor of two large greengrocers. The family

home is a large red-brick detached house set back from Bury Old Road in Ainsworth.

The Bates' declined to comment last night, but a family acquaintance said: "John doesn't get on with his father. A few years ago, Johnny disowned him because of his behaviour. I don't know what will happen to their relationship after this."

The streets of Deane were quiet yesterday, its residents shocked. Although smart by the standards of inner-city drug dealing areas, people spoke of known drug dens, all-night police patrols and fears of walking out at night.

At the end of Bankfield Street, flowers and wreaths were laid in memory of Dillon. "One of God's children brutally murdered," said one. Another, from a young friend read: "Sweet dreams, Power Ranger. RIP."

Mothers were keeping a tight rein on their children last night. "My daughter, Kirsty, used to play with Dillon," said Marie Butler, 25. "Thank God, she's away at the moment."

"When she comes back, I'm going to tell her he's in Heaven with the angels. I mean, how do you explain to a seven-year-old about grown-ups, and guns, and drugs?"

Burger



A healthy guide to eating out, from fast food to the finest restaurants.



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SEPTEMBER ISSUE OUT NOW

Silver for Jackson
Colin Jackson took the silver medal in the 110 metres hurdles final at the World Athletics Championships in Athens last night

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Blair plans end-of-year assessment of Government

Tony Blair is planning to follow today's assessment of Labour's first 100 days in office with an annual report on the performance of the Government next May on the anniversary of the general election.

Denying it would copy the US President's "State of the Nation" address, Downing Street officials said it would take the form of a company chief executive's report to the shareholders, with a check on the 10 main manifesto commitments, including smaller class sizes.

John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, will today highlight the achievements of the Government's first 100 days.

Colin Brown

'Smart phones' to curb jail stalkers

The introduction of "smart telephones" in prisons to stop offenders stalking their victims while they are behind bars will be announced today by the Government.

Joyce Quin, the prisons and probation minister, will announce a comprehensive extension of a scheme to combat the use of telephones by inmates to stalk their victims with nuisance calls. The "smart telephone" technology will limit the prisoners to access to telephone numbers which have been approved by the authorities.

No slim-pill death link, says coroner

A husband's fight to link his wife's death with slimming pills failed yesterday. John Ellis, 44, had fought for more than a year to have an inquest held into the death of his 48-year-old wife Jennifer. Mrs Ellis, a clinical assistant, from Acomb, York, died from a brain haemorrhage in hospital on 22 March 1996. Unknown to her husband, she had been taking the slimming drug Phenetermine, prescribed by a private slimming clinic, on and off for the past seven years.

Her death was at first treated as natural and no inquest was held. But after representations from Mr Ellis's lawyers, York coroner Donald Coverdale agreed to hold the inquest. Mr Coverdale yesterday recorded a verdict of death by natural causes. Expert witness, Dr Peter Kopelman, told the hearing there was no evidence of the slimming drug being linked to brain haemorrhages.

BBC celebrates daytime revival

BBC chiefs are celebrating a daytime TV ratings turnaround after ditching their "sofa celebrities" Nick Owen and Anne Diamond last year.

The *Good Morning With Anne and Nick* stars were dropped after ITV's Richard and Judy became runaway successes, with almost double the audience for their *This Morning* show. Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan accused their rivals of copying them and claimed they deserved to fail. Diamond (pictured) and Owen were

dropped last May, with Diamond refusing to accept a bouquet of flowers sent by BBC Controller Alan Yentob, now Director of Television. But BBC1 daytime ratings have now moved back into contention and are neck-and-neck with ITV.

Seaweed on designer dinner menu

Seaweed, redolent with memories of seaside holidays and apparently better for you than ice cream and candy floss, is bidding to become the next designer ingredient for the country's dinner tables.

Two varieties, sea lettuce and dulse, are going on sale at Tesco, and are recommended for an extra kick in dishes ranging from pasta and chicken to scrambled egg.

Sea lettuce, delicate green and feathery, is said to be good for wrapping fish and meat during cooking – or eating as a salad in a marinade of lemon juice and olive oil.

Dulse, which comes in rich red ribbons, is recommended for enhancing pasta dishes, soups, salads and "works particularly well" with chicken, according to Tesco.

Lord Sutch sees off second party

The Monster Raving Loony Party candidate, Screaming Lord Sutch, may have claimed another scalp after the announcement yesterday by Alan Sked that he was retiring as the leader of the anti-EU UK Independence Party.

Mr Sked, an academic who founded the party in 1993, said work pressure had forced a return to his "ivory tower" at the London School of Economics.

It follows his party's poor showing in the Uxbridge by-election in which the UK Independence Party was beaten by Lord Sutch.

David Owen would up the SDP after his party was humiliated in a by-election by being beaten by a Monster Raving Loony candidate.

Colin Brown

'This bear is not miserable – official'

London Zoo has had to erect signs to reassure worried visitors that a depressed looking bear is perfectly happy.

Lanka, a 14-year-old sloth bear from South Asia, has been displaying worrying behaviour since her move to London from Warsaw Zoo three months ago.

She rocks from side to side in a motion that some animal experts have described as a classic sign of boredom.

But keepers have moved to dispel the worries of people viewing this strange spectacle by putting up signs around her two acre enclosure.

The sign states: "You may have noticed that the female sloth bear sometimes displays an abnormal 'rocking' behaviour in front of doors. The keepers are trying to cure this with a wide variety of behavioural enrichment ideas".

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BACK ISSUES

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people



PW Botha with his wife Elize who died two months ago. Inset: New love Renette Naude

South Africa's old president follows Mandela's love lines

White or black, racist or freedom fighter: what is the secret of the ageing South African politician?

A year ago President Nelson Mandela, 79, and Mozambique's Graca Machel, 28 years his junior, confirmed breathless rumours of romance by canoodling during a presidential trip to Europe.

Now the hero's one-time arch-enemy, the former state president PW Botha, 81, is said to be in love with Renette Naude, a widow almost half his age. While Paris was

the setting for the outing of Mr Mandela and Ms Machel, a town called Wilderness – to which the bitter PW was re-treated in 1989 after being knifed by his cabinet – is apparently the backdrop for this very Afrikaner romance.

Yesterday Mr Botha denied he planned to marry Ms Naude, the vivacious blonde owner of an upmarket guest house. But then he also claims he never realised his security police murdered and maimed to keep him in power. "At the moment I am a lonesome warrior," growled the Groot Krokodil (Great Crocodile), as he

is affectionately known. But Mr Botha was fulsome in his praise of Ms Naude and while the lady herself denied marriage was imminent she did not rule it out later.

If the couple do indeed have plans to marry their connexions is understandable. Elize, Mr Botha's wife of 54 years, only died in June. Yesterday the old joke about Afrikaner funerals was doing the rounds: however grieft-stricken the widower, he always takes time to eye up the mourners.

Somehow it's easier to imagine President Mandela, the world's most popular politician, as a romantic hero than the finger-wagging, stalk-eyed PW Botha.

But each to their own. President Mandela picked a woman with impeccable revolutionary credentials; Ms Naude is said to be a devout member of the local Afrikaner church.

And as Mr Botha pointed out yesterday: "The Bible says it is not good to be alone."

Mary Braid — Johannesburg

Albert Hall chief quits in shock move

Patrick Deuchar has resigned as chief executive of the Royal Albert Hall in London. The resignation shocked associates as Mr Deuchar, who has been at the Hall for eight years, has recently won £40m of lottery money to fulfil his dream of opening up the Hall in the daytime with a cafe, art gallery and entertainments on site.

Mr Deuchar (right) recently married the musicals star Liz Robertson, who made her name as Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* on the West End stage. Professionally, too, he has been celebrating with the RAH co-producing a number of extravaganzas including the ballet *Swan Lake*, arena operas and the Cirque du Soleil.

As chief executive, Mr Deuchar was a firm manager who made numerous personnel changes when he arrived eight years ago. He had a high personal profile, and made a point of promoting the Royal Albert Hall as a national treasure, "the nation's village hall", and widening the Hall's use from the Proms, popular classics and Eric Clapton, to embrace circus for the first time, arena



opera and latterly arena ballet.

There had been reports that he had not always seen eye to eye with his trustees in recent months, but these were sharply denied by spokespeople at the Hall yesterday. Eve Hewitt, director of sales at the Royal Albert Hall, confirmed that Mr Deuchar had resigned, saying he was leaving "to pursue other interests."

But she said there had been no falling out at all between Mr Deuchar and the trustees.

Raymond Gubbay, the concert promoter who presents 50 shows a year at the RAH, said last night: "I am deeply sad that his going. Patrick has done an incredible job in revitalising the Hall."

David Lister

Britain's oldest man dies at 109

Britain's oldest man has died in hospital aged 109.

Vinson Gulliver, who earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records, died peacefully of "old age", his only daughter, Doreen Jackson, said.

The former tram driver – who was born one of 13 children in November 1887, when Queen Victoria was celebrating her golden jubilee – remained alert almost until his death at 8pm on Tuesday in the Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester.

"He'd enjoyed his life but he said he was quite ready to go and in the end he just drifted off," said 66-year-old Mrs Jackson.

A Guinness Book of Records spokesman said the title of Britain's oldest living man was now open. "We are looking at a number of candidates aged around 107 but we will not know until all their documentation has been checked," he said.

Lucy Askew of Buckhurst Hill, Essex is Britain's oldest living person. She is due to celebrate her 114th birthday in September.

Mr Gulliver's death follows the death on Monday of the oldest person in the world, Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment, who was aged 122 years and 153 days.

HEALTH**Epidemic of obesity feared**

A global epidemic of obesity threatens to place an impossible burden on health care systems around the world, in both rich and poor countries a leading expert warned today.

In five middle-aged adults in Europe were sufficiently overweight to be considered obese and the situation is even worse in the US and eastern Europe where it affected as many as half of middle-aged women. Obesity was also rising in the developing nations of South America, the Caribbean and Asia, while in some American Indian tribes and Polynesian races it affected almost 80 per cent of the population.

Writing in the *Lancet*, Professor Per Björntorp, from the Department of Heart and Lung Diseases at the University of Gothenburg, said: "These frequencies mean that countries such as the UK, France and Germany each have 5-10 million inhabitants who are obese and need treatment. A medical problem of this size is probably beyond the capacity of even the best health care system."

Glenda Cooper

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 43.6% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

briefing

SOCIAL POLICY**Drug experts warn against appointing 'zung-ho czar'**

Experts warned the Government today not to turn its new drug czar into a vote-catching "zung-ho" general.

They said the policy could backfire if enforcement was over-emphasised at the expense of treatment, rehabilitation and prevention.

The four drug experts, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, warned of the dangers of "war" rhetoric. They were disappointed that the drug czar had been charged with leading the battle against drugs", and unhappy about the US being chosen as a role model. "The macho nature of the post is further signalled by its title – no czarina need apply," they wrote. The experts were led by John Strang, director of the National Addiction Centre, London. His co-authors were William Clegg, chairman of the Welsh Advisory Committee on Drug and Alcohol Misuse, Lawrence Gruer, a consultant in public health medicine from Glasgow, and Duncan Raistrick, director of the Leeds Addiction Unit.

The role of the drug czar – whose proper title is UK Anti-drugs Co-ordinator – will be to take an overview of strategies to combat substance abuse and make recommendations to the Government. Applications for the post must be in by 5 September.

MOTORING**Car security still not up to scratch**

Nearly 90 per cent of cars can be broken into within two minutes and are therefore failing Home Office vehicle safety requirements, according to test results released yesterday.

But British cars are the most secure on the market and come closest to satisfying Home Office guidelines, the tests conducted by What Car? magazine disclosed.

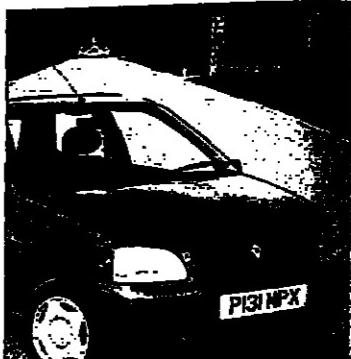
Of the 72 models subjected to break-in and drive-away tests, 64 could be broken into within two minutes – and some in a matter of seconds. Home Office guidelines say cars must resist attempts to drive them away for a further five minutes after being broken into. A total of 61 per cent of the 72 cars passed this five-minute test – 3 per cent more than last year's figure.

In an overall security league table compiled from the test results, the Jaguar XK8 and the Range Rover 4.0 SE were joint top, with 90 out of a maximum 100 points.

These were two of the eight cars that passed both break-in and drive-away tests. The eight included the Ford Fiesta 1.25 Ghia (fifth equal with 80 points) and the Jaguar XJ6 3.2 (seventh with 75 points).

At the foot of the table, with just 10 points each, were the Volkswagen Polo 1.4 CL five-door and the Renault Clio 1.4 RT (pictured).

Randeep Ramesh

**EDUCATION****Media 'stigmatising mental illness'**

National newspapers are "feeding [the] mental health stigma" said health experts yesterday as they launched a initiative to promote respect for those with mental health problems.

A survey of more than 1,000 articles carried out by the Health Education Authority in association with Mind found that almost half press coverage is about crime, harm to others and self-harm with both broadsheets and tabloids making a link between mental health and violence. More than 40 per cent of tabloid articles about mental health carried pejorative words such as "nutter" or "loony" and reports containing advice and guidance accounted for less than 8 per cent of all the coverage.

The HEA and Mind, backed by the National Union of Journalists and the Press Complaints Commission, are calling for more balanced coverage. The survey was published the day the two organisations started targeting 16 to 24-year-olds, who together with the over-75s are the most prejudiced about mental illness in a nationwide scheme. Dr Lynne Friedli, manager of the HEA's mental health project, said: "Greater understanding is crucial to increase respect for people experiencing mental health problems – which could be any one of us at some time in our lives."

SCIENCE**Fly may hold key to human condition**

Do you enjoy dining out, far from the reach of home cooking? The reason could be genetic, especially if you happen to be a fruit fly, researchers reported yesterday.

A single gene appears to determine whether fruit flies – and possibly mammals, including humans – like to forage for food far away or prefer eating close to home, according to Maria Sokolowski, a biologist at York University in Toronto.

The fruit fly world is divided into two distinct types, rovers and sitters, Ms Sokolowski and colleagues wrote in this week's edition of the journal *Science*. Rovers are willing to travel farther for food than the sitters, but both types will rove if food supplies are scarce enough. And rovers will stay home to eat if conditions are right. The genetic basis of the trait means this is a true polymorphism: flies fall into one or the other category, with none who sometimes rove and sometimes sit

First of all there was Shopping and F***ing. Then God came along

Clare Garner

After a season of *Shopping and F***ing*, what better antidote than a blast of the Bible? From tonight there will be no more explicit sexual performances in the West End's Gielgud Theatre. In their place will be revelations of a different kind in a 100-minute staging of the Old and New Testaments.

"The Bible's come along to cleanse the theatre," said Mark Goucher, who co-produced both Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and F***ing* and the Reduced Shakespeare Company's *The Complete Word of The Bible: The Complete Word of Life*.

'One cleric from Poole was so concerned that he told his congregation to pray that the troupe would not make it to Dorset'

God (abridged). The owners of the theatre refused to stage the one play without the other. "They allowed us to bring *Shopping and F***ing* in provided we brought *The Bible* in afterwards," said Mr Goucher.

"They thought *The Bible* would be more commercially successful than *Shopping and F***ing* would ever be, so we tied up the two."

But Nica Bruns, production director of Stoll Moss Theatres, which owns a dozen West End theatres, insists there was "no irony intended" in the two-play deal. None the less, she hopes *The Bible* will capitalise on the "young, hip audience" which was attracted by its predecessor. "The perception of

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that it's very difficult to make new controversial plays work there, but there's a massive, young, trendy audience out there," he said. "It's that new audience that everyone desperately wants to get into the West End to ensure its survival."

The Reduced Shakespeare Company's other plays, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (abridged)* and *The Complete History of America (abridged)*, both running at The Criterion Theatre, are attracting a predominantly young audience too. The producers of *The Bible* are confident that their latest show will do the same.

The Reduced Shakespeare Company considers *The Bible* to be "the perfect addition" to its repertoire.

"It's long, internationally known, packed with sex and violence and, most importantly, these three cultural apostles cannot be sued by the original authors," said a spokeswoman.

"After unceasing and diligent research they are now able to reveal the answers to questions that have baffled theological scholars for centuries such as: 'Did Adam and Eve have navels?' and 'Did Moses really look like Charlton Heston?'"

The Bible runs at the Gielgud Theatre from 8 August to 1 November.

—

Ship's captain jailed over crew's death on the rocks

Kim Sengupta and Louise Hancock

The skipper of the shipwrecked *Maria Asumpta*, the world's oldest sailing vessel, was jailed for 18 months yesterday after being convicted of manslaughter over the deaths of three crew members.

Former Royal Navy lieutenant Mark Litchfield, 56, was found guilty on a majority decision at Exeter Crown Court after a five-week trial which followed the loss of the square-rigger on the north Cornwall coast.

Mr Justice Butterfield, the presiding judge, had told the jury that to return a manslaughter verdict they had to be sure Litchfield, who also owned the ship, was grossly negligent in breaching a duty he had to take reasonable care of his crew.

The judge said it was his duty to sentence Litchfield, 56, for the criminal conduct which led to three deaths. He added: "These matters are so serious as to require the imposition of an immediate sentence to punish you for your criminal conduct which has resulted in the loss of three innocent lives".

He recognised that there was no sense of vindictiveness or need for retribution on the part of victims' relatives. The sentence was not intended to reflect the worth of the lives lost.

Cook Anne Taylor, 51, from Wallingford, Oxfordshire; assistant bosun Emily Macfarlane, 19, from Felixstowe;



The *Maria Asumpta* lying on rocks at Mous Rock, near Padstow, Cornwall, on 30 May 1995. Photograph: BBC/Reuters

Suffolk and 30-year-old second engineer John Shannon, from Queensland, Australia, were killed when the 137-year-old *Maria Asumpta* hit submerged rocks at Mous Rock, near Padstow, Cornwall, on 30 May 1995.

Richard Lissack, QC, for the prosecution, had told the court that Litchfield failed to sail the ship at a safe distance from the shore, and had to rely on the engines to avoid grounding, knowing they were likely to fail because of contaminated fuel.

The Crown did not allege that Litchfield intended to kill the crew members, but that he was guilty of causing their deaths "by criminal negligence

had fallen in the water at Gloucester docks. And a crewman who survived, Adam Purser, 47, from St Mawes in Cornwall, described to the court how he had felt "completely and utterly" let down by Litchfield and had shouted at him "you bastard you bastard" at the moment of impact.

Mr Purser added: "I saw John Shannon. He was holding the base of a picnic box which was fairly buoyant but it did not have a handle and was difficult to hold on to. After a time his strength failed and he let go, and he disappeared."

However, the son of Ms Farlane gave evidence on behalf of Litchfield during the trial, and said that he did not hold him responsible for her death. Darren Taylor, 22, had previously served with Litchfield on the *Maria Asumpta*, and told the jury he would be happy to sail with him again.

The *Maria Asumpta* tragedy was the second time Litchfield had been involved in a sinking of a ship. In 1985, *The Marques*, which Litchfield co-owned, was lost at the edge of the so-called Bermuda Triangle during a Tall Ships race.

The Marques had featured in several television and film productions including *Poldark*, *The Onedin Line*, and *Jamaica Inn* as well as a production of *Dracula* with Lord Olivier. Litchfield was not on board at the time of the accident, and was not accused of an offence.



God slot: The Reduced Shakespeare Company's latest iconoclastic blast compresses the Old and New testaments into a performance of less than two hours, romping from 'fig leaves to final judgement'. Photographs: Geraint Lewis

Mystery of attack on Avon Lady

Alexandra Williams

A widow heard yesterday how her husband died while subjecting a woman to a terrifying attack in her own home. The inquest into the death of David Stuchbery was told how he died from a single stab wound on February 4th, as he attacked Avon saleswoman Wendy Hertz in her own home.

Mrs Hertz, 36, described her horrific ordeal, which left her mentally and physically scarred.

She said that on the morning of February 4th she answered her front door to Stuchbery. Recognising him as a customer of hers, the Avon lady invited him to step inside her house from the cold while she went to get him a catalogue.

But Stuchbery came inside and she saw he was holding a knife. "His eyes grew wide. He raised his left arm across my chest. I could feel his breath on my face. I know the knife was very close to my neck and he was just staring at my face."

"I asked 'Why are you doing this?' Slowly and mechanically, he said: 'I don't know,'" she said.

Mrs Hertz screamed as Stuchbery pushed her head back and tried to kiss her. "He unzipped my jeans and he started to pull them off. It was then I was able to pick up the knife."

Although Mrs Hertz managed to grab the knife, having been cut she could not grip it properly. Her attacker, who had been drinking alcohol, pushed her onto the stairs and shouted: "You're going to get it. You're going to get it."

Mrs Hertz does not recall stabbing Stuchbery. The next thing she remembers is her attacker lying face down in the hallway. Terrified that he would



Wendy Hertz: Left scarred

suddenly pounce on her again she reached for a bottle and hit him on his head, before running out of her house to her next-door neighbours.

Police found blood smeared on the walls and the flick-knife, used by Mr Stuchbery's wife to gut fish, lying in the corridor.

Detective Inspector Alan Scott, the investigating officer, said: "On that morning Mr Stuchbery went out with the specific intention of carrying out a serious sexual offence on Mrs Hertz. He knew that if Mrs Hertz had survived she would have had no difficulty in identifying him. It is my opinion that had he not died, he would not have let her survive."

The court heard how Stuchbery, a 49-year-old road sweeper, was shy and found it hard to make friends, but had been happily married to his wife Linda, a primary school Head Mistress. Mrs Stuchbery, her voice trembling, said: "What David did was wholly out of character, very unexpected and very tragic. I cannot offer an explanation. He just seemed to snap."

The coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death.

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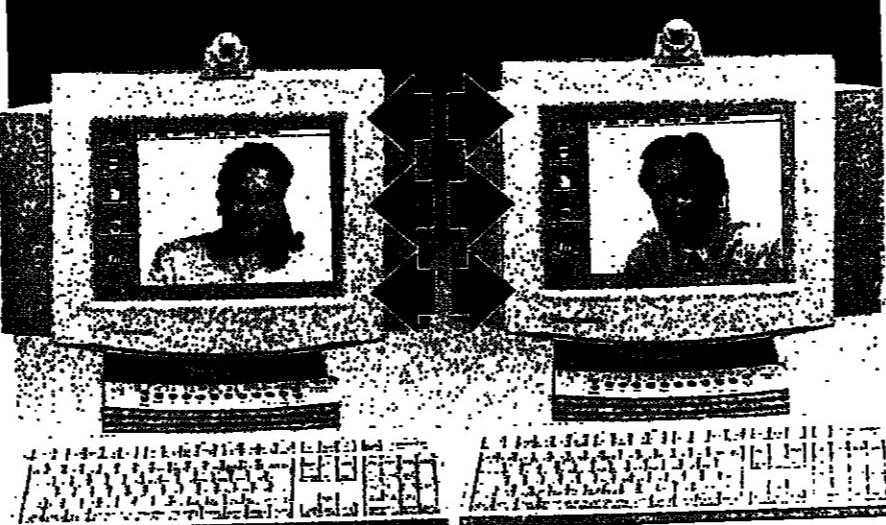
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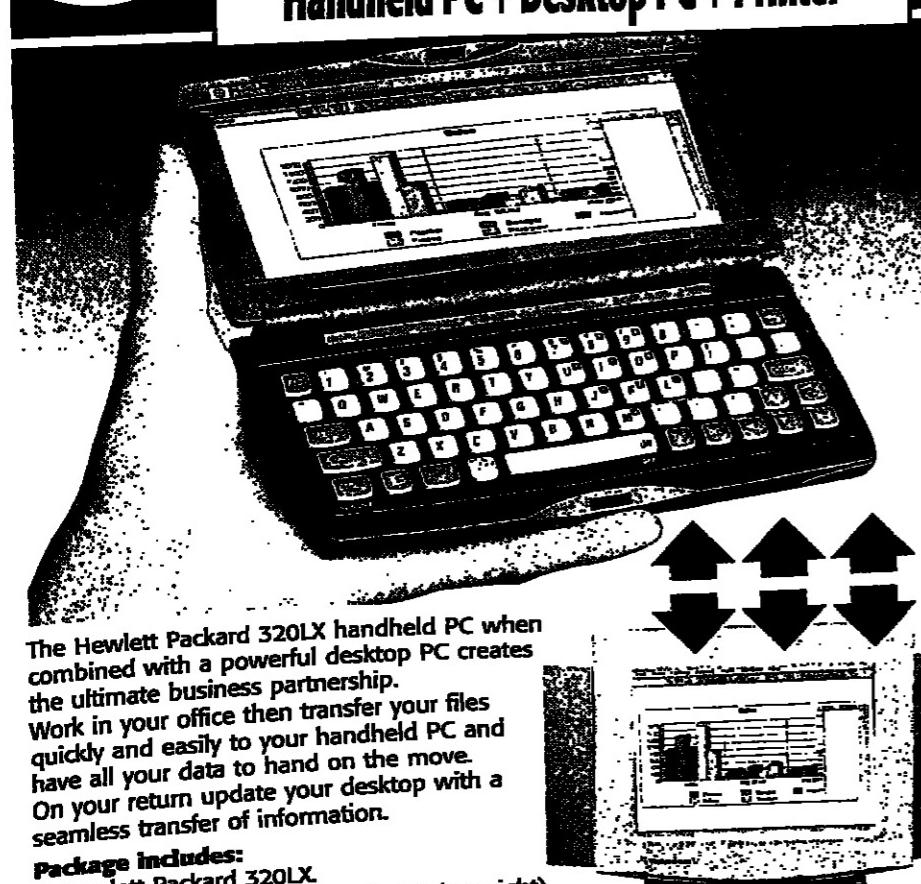
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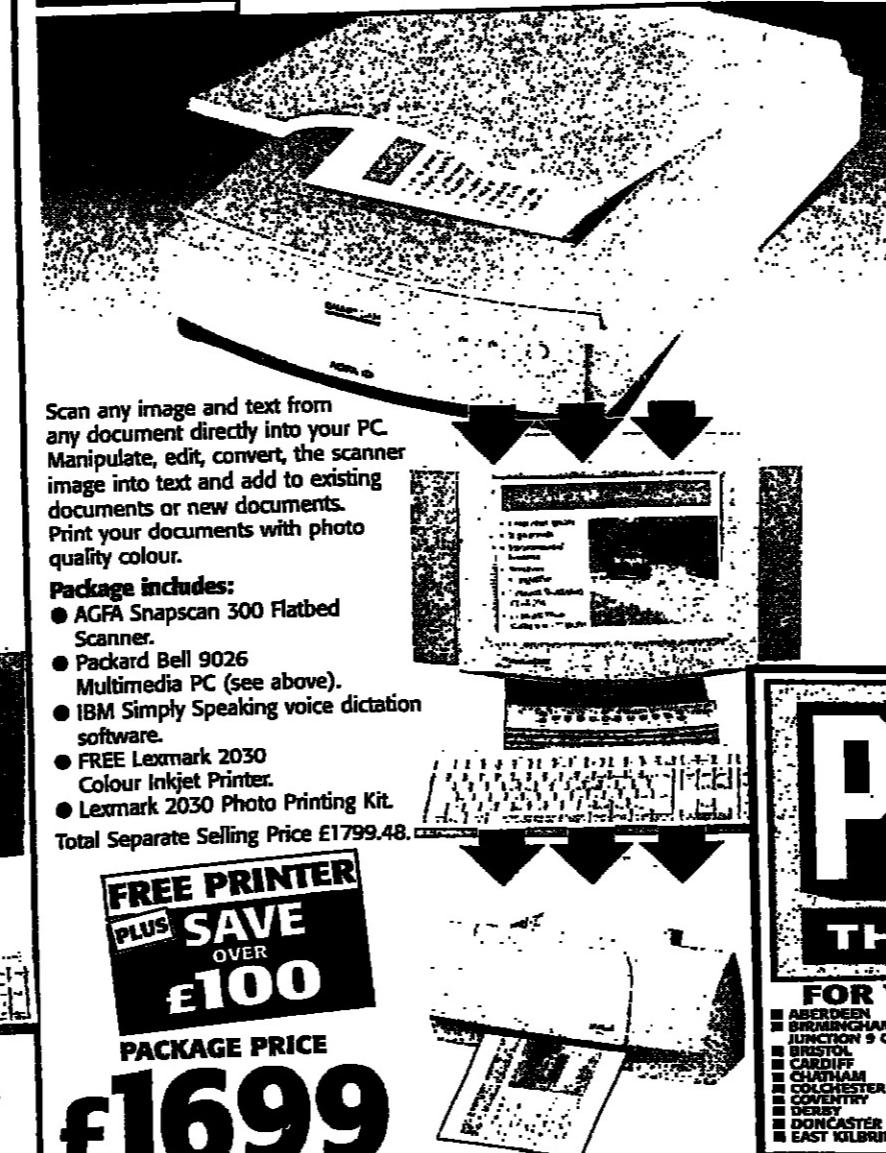
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Hidden role: Fatima Beltagui in her hijab or veil at the opening of The Veil in Islam exhibition at Glasgow's St Mungo Museum. Photograph: Colin Templeton

Clark blames the Press for hounding Labour MP to his death

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Press intrusion was blamed yesterday by Alan Clark, the Tory MP, for contributing to the persecution which drove Gordon McMaster, the Labour MP, to suicide.

Mr Clark, an outspoken former Conservative minister who has suffered from the press pack in the past, said new restrictions on press intrusion of privacy could have helped protect those like Mr McMaster who were in the spotlight.

The circumstances surrounding Mr McMaster's death

may now increase the pressure for press privacy laws, which Tony Blair has been resisting. The previous Government decided against any immediate action after a long review by Virginia Bottomley, the former National Heritage Secretary.

The Labour chief whip, Nicholas Brown is investigating the allegations made in Mr McMaster's suicide note that two Labour figures, Don Dixon, a former deputy chief whip, and Tommy Graham, a Labour MP with a neighbouring seat, had been "bad mouthing" him. Both deny the claims.

The *New Statesman* this week carries an article by a gay journalist suggesting that Mr McMaster was a victim of repressed homosexuality. But Irene Adams, a close friend of Mr McMaster, said the press also played a part in the pressure on the MP by asking him whether he was dying from Aids.

Ms Adams recalled that Mr McMaster, who suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome, which he believed was brought about by exposure to chemicals when he was a gardener, could not speak because he was so upset and distressed by the call from a local reporter in Paisley.

Mr Clark said Lady Caithness, wife of a former Tory minister in the Lords, and Lady Green, wife of the former Director of Public Prosecutions, were both driven to suicide partly as a result of the pressure from the press.

He described the press as being like an "18th-century mob", and describes the treatment he and his family have received at the hands of reporters and photographers. On one occasion, Mr Clarke's wife, Jane, was wrongly told by the press that he had fathered a love child.

"This was quite remarkably cruel and deceitful behaviour," he wrote. He added: "No-one who has not experienced the pain of having their loved ones in tears for hours on end, their children too terrified to attend school, the feeling of total entrapment in their own house, can appreciate what this is like."

"And it is deliberate. It is, sometimes literally, a blood sport, and the practitioners enjoy it." He wrote: "It is routine practice for the wife to be goaded without mercy in order to provoke a reaction."

"If she stays contentedly married to a 'cheat', she is a wimp and a 'doormat'. If she walks out, then it is the press who have scored. Another marriage wrecked - excellent."

"Press harassment does dri-



Clark and McMaster: New restrictions on press could have protected McMaster



ve some people over the edge. If you are in public life, you have to be able to resist it. But if you are innocent, at the edge of it, like Lady Caithness and Lady Green, it can be very cruel and lead to tragic results."

The most offensive journalists, he said, were the groups of reporters who waited on the doorstep, and the "monkeys" who popped their flashbulbs at mass at their victims.

Attacking the press complaints commission as "useless", Mr Clark said the European Court of Human Rights was going to bring into English Law certain restrictions on the intrusion of the right of privacy which he welcomed.

But he also took a sideswipe on BBC radio at Frank Johnson, editor of the *Spectator*, for including Diana, Princess of Wales in his article, without his permission. "I am very surprised. The *Spectator* is meant to be a serious paper. That is why I sent it that article. I now wish I had sent it to Alan Rusbridger to put in the *Guardian*."

DAILY POEM

post-mistress

By Anne MacLeod

my feet endure
the seasons' floods
fingers sift, delve deeply

a ripple of postcards
on an ink-scratched tide
stamps from Amsterdam, Lloret del Mar

where Moran had her first joint
at eighty-two
reckless in the noon-day heat

and wrote to tell her son
all about it

This poem comes from Anne MacLeod's first collection, *Standing by Thistles* (Scottish Cultural Press, £4.95). The author lives in Inverness, studied medicine in Aberdeen and now works as a dermatologist in Highland communities.

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THE INDEPENDENT • FRIDAY 8 AUGUST 1997

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news

The disaster that *really* worries Mr Bean's brother



Rodney Atkinson: 'The evidence which links Hitler with today's EU is dynamite'

Foreign adventures are no laughing matter for a less celebrated Atkinson

Alexandra Williams

One is Britain's highest paid comic actor whose most successful and lucrative character is the inept Mr Bean. The other is known for his full-throated assaults on the European Union and was an adviser to the late Sir James Goldsmith.

The comic Rowan Atkinson seems worlds apart from his brother Rodney. As cinema goers roll around in the aisles watching *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster*, released today, Mr Bean's serious big brother will be at home in Stocksfield, Northumberland, plotting his next way to "stop the EU rot and international conspiracy to destroy the nation".

But there is no mistaking that they are brothers. Although moustachioed, Rodney Atkinson has that same pliable rubberface and both can be deadly serious.

The reclusive comic said: "Sometimes I wonder what I'm doing in showbusiness. I'm just not the type. It's as though I wandered in accidentally and there's no way out."

"Half of me is shy, even dull. I can't perform at parties. People who meet me for the first time leave thinking: 'What a miserable git'."

Rodney, Rowan and their older brother Rupert were brought up in Cessett and went to school with the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, at Durham Choristers. Whilst Rowan performed in the school plays,

Rodney buried his head in politics. At the last General Election he stood as the Referendum Party candidate in the Labour stronghold of Durham North West. He polled 5.12 per cent of the votes.

The 48-year-old has written several books condemning the EU. His latest - *Europe's Full Circle* - has sold more than 3,000 copies in the last six months. Its cover replaces one of the stars on the EU flag with the Nazi swastika.

"The evidence which links the Hitler regime with today's EU is dynamite," said Mr Atkinson.

"What the Nazis said and planned before, during and after the war is now seen in today's German state and the power of the EU."

"The Nazis designed it and the so-called democratic Germans have forced it on the once free peoples of Western Europe."

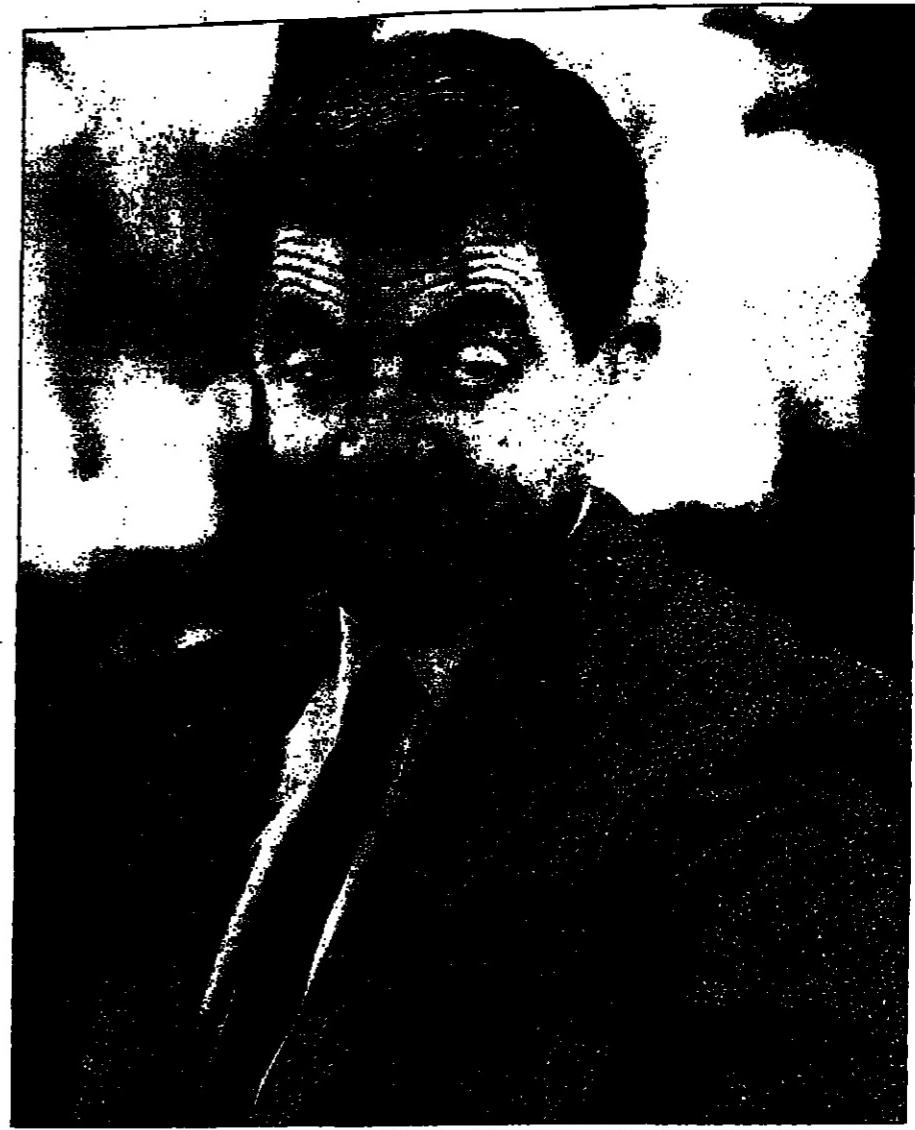
Back in 1993 Black Adder's brother and *Guinness Book of Records* editor Norris McWhirter accused the then Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, of treason for signing the Maastricht treaty.

"My grandfather fought in the First World War and my father in the Second - we regard this as a third European war," said Rodney.

A fan of his brother's work, Mr Atkinson is unmarried and lives at home with his elderly mother, Ella.

"I'm very proud of Rowan.

Mr Bean is very funny. He's an amalgamation of many people Rowan has seen and met, even the old schoolmaster is in there," he said.



Rowan: 'People who meet me for the first time think: "What a miserable git"'

University rush made worse by top grades

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

A predicted rush for university places, with up to 90,000 extra candidates scrambling for the last non fee-paying places, is likely to be made worse by a rise in the A-level success rate this year.

If an eight-year steady improvement in A-level grades continues when results are published next week, more applicants will meet university offers and secure places.

Relief for some will mean added pressure for others with weaker results who will have to fight it out with unprecedented numbers of would-be students for fewer vacant places.

Figures released yesterday by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) offered early indications of a predicted dash for places this autumn. Last-minute applications to university are up by 38 per cent on last year, and the numbers of students placed in clearing so far are up 75 per cent.

The trend follows the announcement last month of government plans to introduce means-tested tuition fees of up to £1,000 per year of study and abolish maintenance grants. The reforms will be phased in from 1998.

The UCAS chief executive, Tony Higgins, said candidates who failed to get the required grades could face competition with up to 90,000 more late applicants than in past years.

They could include students who had planned a gap year be-

fore starting university in 1998. others who qualify this summer but originally did not intend to apply until next year, and 19-20-year-olds who already have A-levels but have delayed applying.

Vice-chancellors' leaders yesterday confirmed that candidates would have to be prepared to compromise. The chief executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, Diana Warwick, told BBC Breakfast News that students might not gain their first choice of course. "It is just a question of whether or not the course that you, as a particular student wanted, will be available to you, and that is going to be a bit of a lottery," she said.

Baroness Blackstone, minister for education and employment, dismissed fears that students with deferred places will cancel their gap years as "irresponsible scaremongering".

She said: "If students who have deferred for a year were to rush for this year, they risk having to seek entry at the last minute into courses and institutions they would not otherwise have chosen. Raising fears like this is unnecessary and self-fulfilling."

A survey by UCAS of students who applied and qualified for university entry last autumn but opted not to take up a place found many had changed their mind over their chosen subjects during their year out. The finding will add weight to fears that pupils who rush for places this year to avoid fees may end up taking an unsuitable course.

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news

The Ulster ceasefire: Six beatings, three shootings and two bombings

Jojo Moyes

Belfast
The IRA ceasefire, marking a cessation of political violence, is nearly three weeks old. In that time Northern Ireland has seen at least six sectarian beatings, three shootings, one hotel bombing, one petrol bombing and the delivery of two hoax devices.

Politicians and police warned yesterday that until the level of violence endemic in Belfast society dropped, the "precarious" political peace process would be in jeopardy.

Steve McBride, justice spokesman for Ulster's Alliance Party, noting the continuing high levels of sectarian-related violence, said that while people were still being maimed, threatened and intimidated, the risk that the ceasefire would crack was only too great. He said the incidents might look minor in isolation, but often had a "knock-on" effect. "Someone feels obliged to retaliate, a family feels turned into something much worse, they see someone else getting away with it, and it just escalates," Mr McBride told BBC Radio Ulster's *Talkback* programme.

"These groups are exercising violence and terror as a way of maintaining power and influence in particular localities," he said. "We have to take this very seriously. It's a real threat to what very precarious peace process or ceasefire we currently have."

He said the problem was that many in Ulster had become so used to the incidents that they achieved a degree of "acceptability". But these are horrendous injuries that are being inflicted on people, without any kind of defence. Any society that tolerated that sort of conduct as a legitimate form of punishment would be viewed by the rest of the world as reprehensible".

Sectarian violence since the truce

Sunday 20 July: Ceasefire announced; 25-year-old man beaten by masked men who burst into his home in loyalist area of Bushmills; 36-year-old man attacked by men armed with guns and baseball bats in loyalist Carrickfergus.

28 July: Body of Catholic James Morgan, 16, found in Co Down. Police investigating whether motive sectarian.

31 July: Police detonate "substantial" bomb at the Carrybridge Hotel in Fermanagh. Security forces believe it may have been a republican device.

3 August: 21-year-old man beaten by masked men who burst into a house in Londonderry. Republican movement denies involvement. Two other beatings, described as "loyalist" by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, carried out in the period up to 4 August.



Happy days: Children playing innocently around a burst water pipe in a Belfast street, but even a minor squabble among them can have serious repercussions. Photograph: Brian Horne

The organisation Families Against Violence, which deals with up to 30 such cases every month, said it had seen "no significant drop" in low-level violence since the latest ceasefire was called. "The beatings may have largely stopped, but the shootings are continuing and the intimidation and threats are still going on. And they don't get reported because people don't dare," a spokeswoman said.

She added: "A lot of these cases are one 10-year-old kid who's hit an eight-year-old and the mother has gone round to sort it out. Whereas before, the mothers might have had a good old talking to each other, now they're just saying 'get out of my door', going inside and making the phone call.

"The paramilitaries have got nothing to do at the moment, so they don't mind getting involved. And the family is left with bricks through the window, intimidation, and they have no resort. What are they going to do?"

The Royal Ulster Constabulary, meanwhile, was said yesterday to be "concerned" by an apparently republican shooting in the province, the first since the ceasefire was announced. An RUC source said that up until Tuesday, signs had been "encouraging", due to the lack of republican activity.

But Wednesday night's shooting of a taxi driver by gunmen who identified themselves as members of the IRA had halted that optimism.

He added that contrary to recent reports, while the sectarian violence continued, there would be no significant drop in security measures for the near future.

"The bottom line is that we're only a few days in. During the 1994 ceasefire it was months before police took on a reduction

in security or anything. We've had a 1,000lb bomb at a hotel, the INLA saying they're going to carry on regardless and the LUF warning Catholics out of their areas. It would be someone foolish who would say everything

in the garden is rosy," he said.

■ Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday said that the Government was standing firm on its target of holding multi-party talks in Belfast on 15 Sep-

tember, in spite of a rejection of the process by Ian Paisley, leader of the hard-line Democratic Unionist Party, writes Colin Brown.

Mr Paisley said after a meeting with Ms Mowlam in London

that the Government would be "digging its own grave" on the talks, if the format was not changed. He repeated his claims that the talks were "dead in the water" and put forward a four-page alternative plan, which it is

believed seeks arms decommissioning by the IRA before Sinn Fein can join the talks. He warned he would not sit down with Sinn Fein leaders, and would not take part in "proximity" talks.

Meanwhile, Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionists' spokesman, and Sinn Fein negotiator Martin McGuinness are to debate live and face-to-face on BBC2's *Newsnight* programme next Tuesday.

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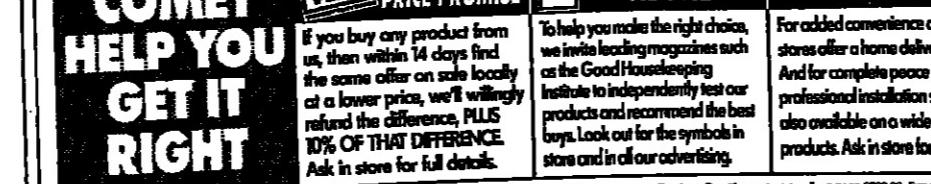
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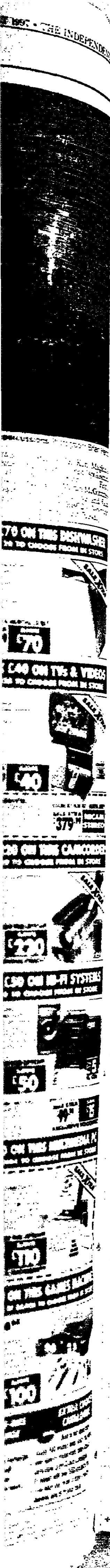
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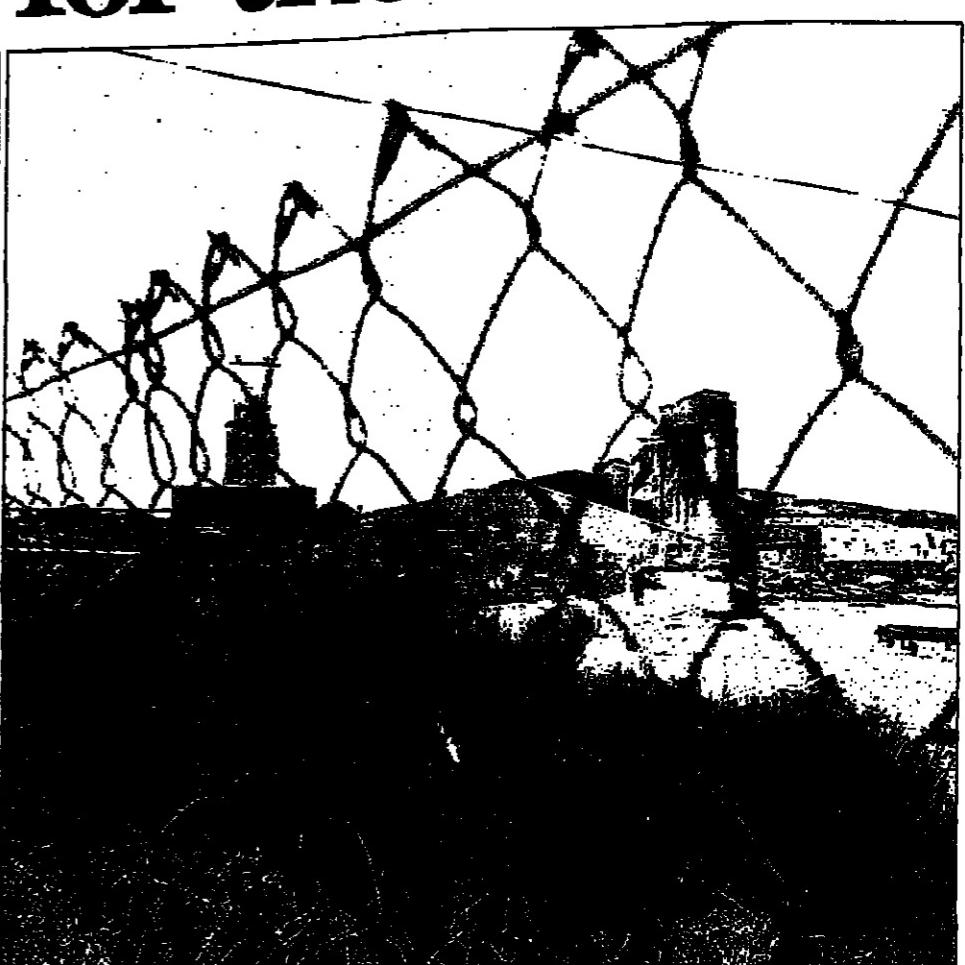
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After 2,500 years, the end for the tin men



Shafted: A miner at work in South Crofty, near Redruth, which is slated for closure over the next six months, ending a 2,500-year-old industry in the county



Photographs: Guy Newman, Tim Cuff

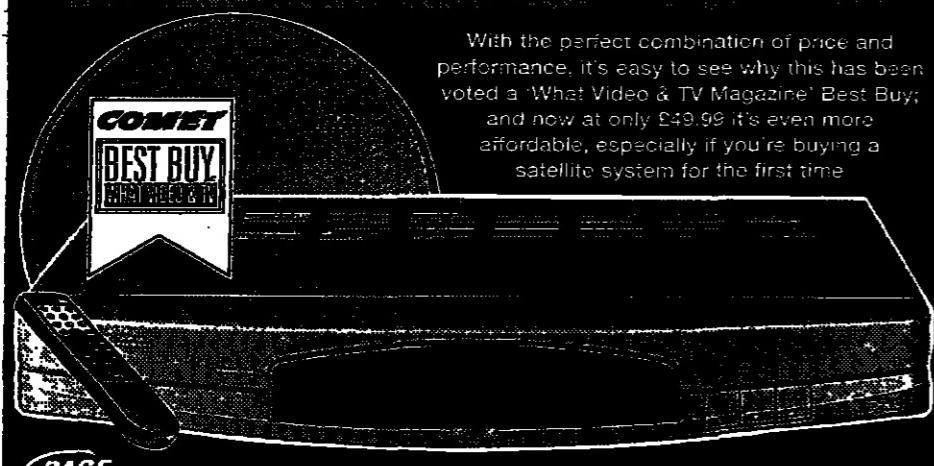
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After a history stretching back at least 2,500 years, tin-mining is to end in Cornwall. The last surviving mine in Britain, and Europe, yesterday announced it will close with the loss of 270 jobs.

The first 75 jobs to go will be through voluntary redundancy and lay-offs. Owners of South Crofty mine, near Redruth, blamed the decision - which will take effect over the next six months - on the falling price of tin on the world market and the strengthening value of the pound against the dollar.

The workforce was told of the announcement yesterday in a meeting at Redruth Cinema.

It marks a long, sometimes nostalgic battle to save Cornwall's most distinctive industry, which during its heyday in the 19th century employed 30,000 people, spread through 400 mines. There were tin mines in the region before, during and after the Roman empire in Britain.

The mine's project manager, Bernard Ballard, said yesterday: "It's a very sad day. Tin-mining is the great Cornish tradition." However, he said there would certainly be efforts made locally to keep the mine alive. "There is such strength of feeling here about it. There has got to be a way to keep it open."

"It would be an absolute tragedy if the mine closed and then the problems with the price of tin and the exchange rate changed. But as things stand, unless there is an intervention, it will close."

His views were echoed by Dore Ansari, leader of Cornwall County Council, who said: "This is a very sad day for Cornwall, which means far more than the immediate loss of jobs - tin-mining is probably the most potent aspect of Cornwall's history and heritage."

She urged local MP Cathy Atherton to lead a delegation to the President of the Board of

Canned history of proud industry

At the peak of the Cornish tin boom in the 19th century there were 400 mines employing 30,000 people.

Cornwall has produced two million tonnes of tin, most brought to the surface in the last century.

Tin is found in veins or lodes and unlike coal seams, these tend towards the vertical rather than horizontal.

The tin was laid down 250 million years ago when molten granite intruded into the earth's surface. Superheated waters rich in tin oxide and other chemicals were forced into the surrounding rocks, where they cooled to form veins of tin and copper ore.

The world market for tin remains stable. The metal is used for cans and as a chemical in industrial processes. Production is largely concentrated in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil and Bolivia. Until 1870, Cornwall and Malaya monopolised tin production. This ended with the discovery of tin in Australia, causing the industry's first recession.

The famous Cornish pasty was originally used by miners as an easy-to-eat sweet and savoury meal, one of the earliest examples of convenience food.

Europe's last tin mine is to close with the loss of 270 jobs. Michael Streeter reports

Trade, Margaret Beckett, and called for a "regeneration package" for the area. It is feared the closure could have a knock-on effect.

The beginning of the end of the industry came when the tin price collapsed in 1985, forcing the closure of mines across Europe. In 1994, when South Crofty also seemed doomed, 1,500 small investors, including the miners themselves, offered to buy £500,000 of shares in a £1m effort.

At the same time, the mine was taken over by the Crew Group of companies, a Canarian-based resource group.

Since their involvement, the mine has received cash injections of about £6.3m. A company spokesman praised the "dedicated" workforce, which had reduced costs and increased productivity over the past year.

He added: "However, since early 1996, two major external factors have combined to force the company to take a very difficult decision to close the mine."

"The first was the significant drop in the tin price, which is quoted in US dollars; secondly, the substantial weakening of the dollar against sterling."

He said the price of a tonne of tin had fallen to £3,200 - way below the £4,000 a tonne minimum needed to keep the mine open.

Ms Ansari added: "This is yet another blow to the economy of an area which has twice the national average of unemployment - and therefore expensive - to reopen full production. Eventually, after the pumps are stopped, water levels will rise and hamper any mining attempts for the future."

A mining source said: "That will make it very difficult, though not impossible, to resume any mining in the future."

The company has indicated

Despite the closure, the mine is not short of tin, with estimates of at least three years of reserves left.

The Government later promised support for the area. Barbara Roche, minister for small businesses at the Department of Trade and Industry, said: "The Government office for the South West and all the local agencies are ready to work closely with the local authorities about what can be done to alleviate the impact."

Ms Atherton said she was devastated by the news of the closure. "The livelihoods of so many people and their families depend on the mine."

In this already depressed area, it is a severe blow. I think every tribute is due to the hard work of so many who put everything into making it successful. But, in spite of all their efforts they have been overwhelmed by economic circumstances.

"It is a very sad day for the whole of Cornwall ... It is impossible to express the anguish that will be felt across the county," she said.

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news

One man's dream green house comes to life

Neil Winder has designed and built the ultimate eco-home.

Eager not to further damage the environment, Mr Winder, an architect, also set about turning his four-bedroom timber-framed home into one of Britain's most environmentally friendly dwellings.

Instead of going down a sewer, human waste goes into a chamber where, aided by straw and sawdust, it is turned into compost for his roses.

Waste water from the sink and the bath is cleansed by a reed-bed system to purify it before it drains into a ditch. And instead of burning fossil fuels to keep warm, a three-tonne stove burns locally coppiced wood.

Mr Winder, 48, his partner Flo Maitland and their 10-year-old daughter Molly have lived for a year in the house called Star Yard at Palgrave, near Diss, Norfolk, in the val-

ley of the river Waveney. The walls, filled with eight inches of recycled paper insulation, keep the interiors cool in summer and warm in winter. They also "breathe", avoiding condensation problems.

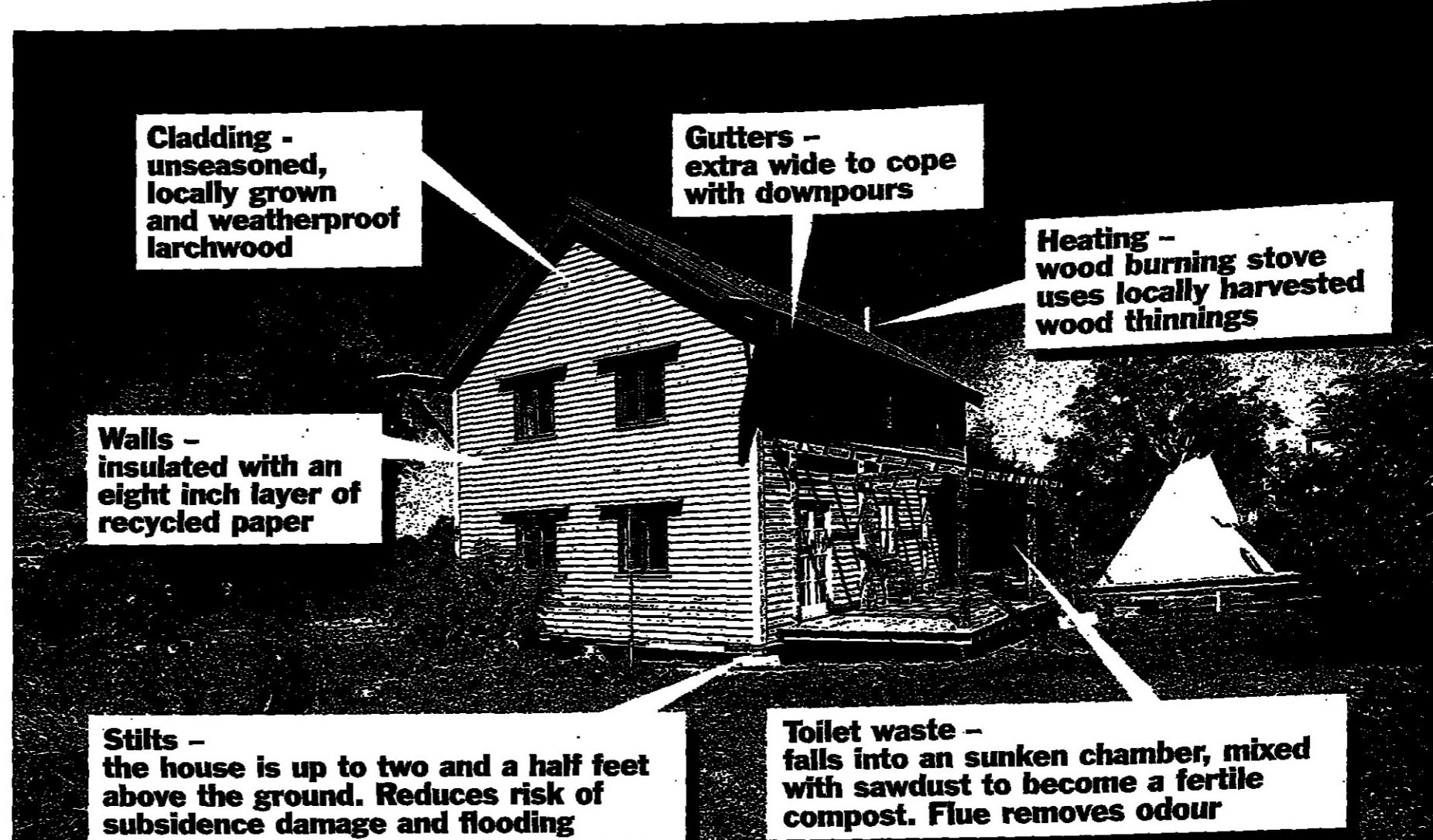
The house is clad in unseasoned larch wood, an efficient and cheap rain barrier grown a few miles away.

Mr Winder also insisted on minimum use of lead, glues and toxic preservatives.

The house stands up to two and a half feet above the ground on a dozen concrete stilts on individual concrete pads. As well as protecting against any flash floods, they reduce the dangers of subsidence caused by droughts shrinking the clay subsoil.

The roofing is extra strong to withstand gale force winds. And there is timber guttering twice the normal width to cope with future cloud-bursts.

The house cost Mr Winder about £68,000 to build - the same as building a conventional brick home. He



"I'm not an eco-fascist. I just wanted to cause the minimum of disturbance to the environment," says Neil Winder of his home

Photograph: Brian Harris

paid a local farmer £39,000 for the half-acre plot after getting planning permission from Mid Suffolk council.

There have been difficulties though, most memorably with the compost toilet. "We had a smell and a fly problem at first, but this was completely overcome by altering the design of the flue," said Mr Winder.

Also, the reed-bed water filtering system suffered from a build up of grease, but he solved that by intro-

ducing a straw trap through which the waste water must first run.

The next phase is to introduce solar water heating and recycle the purified reed-bed water for use in the house.

Mr Winder said: "Nobody can say

with any confidence what the world will be like in 40 years time, but you can make some guess and that's what I have done.

"Scientists are saying we will be having hotter summers and periods of drought followed by sudden

rounds of heavy rain and storms. I'm not an eco-fascist. I just wanted to go as far as I could in building a comfortable and functional family home to live and work in while causing the minimum of disturbance to the environment."

Top security prisoners banned from touching families

**Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent**

An inquiry is to be launched into why some IRA prisoners and other top-security inmates in British jails are banned from touching their family for years.

It was announced yesterday.

Evidence also emerged that suggests some of the country's

most dangerous convicted criminals are switching from taking cannabis to heroin in an attempt to beat drug tests.

In one month more than half the positive drug tests were for heroin.

The revelations follow the publication today of the findings of an unannounced short inspection last September of Belmarsh high-security jail, in

south-east London, by the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham.

He will hold an inquiry later this year to review the visiting arrangements for prisoners deemed to be an exceptional risk at the country's six high-security jails.

Sir David's report highlights the condition faced by the

inmates kept in the separate special security unit inside Belmarsh.

All prisoners within the unit, which holds up to 48 men, including convicted IRA terrorists such as Paul "Dingus" Magee, who is serving 25 years for murdering a special constable, have closed visits - a plastic screen divides inmates from

prisoners. For some this may mean they can go for years without being able to touch their children or wife, with the obvious effects on relationships," noted the report.

Sir David said there was far too little out-of-cell activity for Category A prisoners. They are only allowed out for 90 minutes a day.

There are six exceptional-risk inmates at Belmarsh, most of whom are IRA members, and 27 men considered high-risk.

The Inspectorate is concerned that at some high-security jails contact is allowed and wants to ensure prisons get the right balance between the needs of security and humanity.

In February, the Tory gov-

ernment turned down a recommendation by the former Chief Medical Officer, Sir Donald Acheson, that closed visits at the SSUs should be ended. But the Prison Service did agree to regular three-monthly health checks for inmates.

Results from mandatory drug tests at Belmarsh reveal an alarming increase in the

number of inmates found to have taken heroin. The proportion rose from 9 per cent of the positive results in December 1995 to a maximum of 54.5 per cent in June last year.

The inspectors also came across a mystery during their visit: how 12,000 prison library books had gone missing since 1991.

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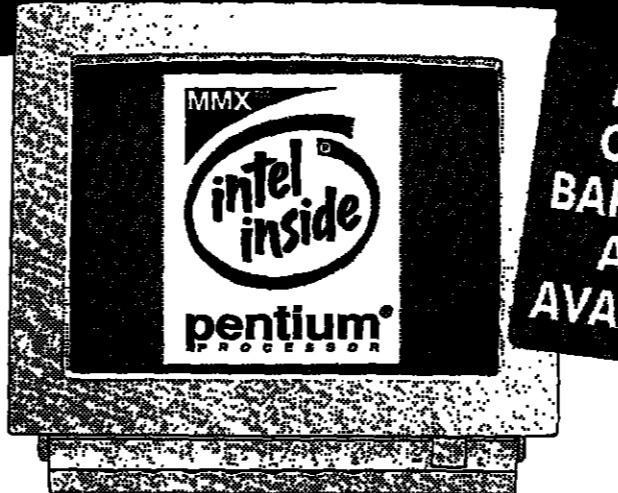
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12 international

Syria hears Israeli Arab plea for a real peace

Robert Fisk
Damascus

Confronted by what he regards as an Israeli government hell-bent on burying the "peace process", President Assad of Syria today takes the dramatic step of welcoming at least 50 Israeli Arabs to Damascus, seven of them members of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. They were due to fly into Syria late last night on their Israeli passports for meetings with the president and with his foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa.

A delegation of Israeli Arabs briefly visited Syria in 1995 to express their condolences to President Assad after the death of his son, Basil, in a road accident, but today's visit allows the Syrian leader to show that he has political allies inside Israel itself – at the very moment when the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is being denounced in the Damascus press as a warmonger who seeks only to destroy the foundations of the "peace process".

The Israeli Arabs, who are flying via Cairo since no direct air links exist between Syria and Israel, include members of the Israeli Labour Party, Meretz, the Democratic Front for Equality and Peace, a number of journalists and more than a dozen members of Islamist movements.

"They are against Netanyahu's policy in the occupied territories," Mr Mohamed Salman, the Syrian information minister, said yesterday. "They want to achieve a real peace with the Arab states and they asked to visit Syria to express their support for Syria's position and to tell the world that people can co-exist."

Syria regards Mr Netanyahu's refusal to withdraw Israeli troops from the occupied Golan Heights as an Israeli betrayal of the 1991 Madrid peace conference which was specifically founded on UN Security Council resolution 242 – which called for total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied lands in return for security of all states in the area.

In the past, Israel's Arabs were regarded by the rest of the Arab world with suspicion and sometimes outright hostility. For 18 years, they lived under harsh Israeli military law while being regarded elsewhere in the Middle East as little more than agents of Israel. That Syria's strict Baathist regime should welcome them now emphasises how their role has changed – and how important they have become to President Assad.

"The Palestinians who stuck to their land in 1948 continued their struggle and sacrificed thousands of martyrs to the national cause. That's why we in Syria open our doors to them, contrary to the former situation," Mr Salman said.

Indeed little could the Israeli Arabs – hitherto heretics in the Palestinian world – ever have imagined checking in at the Damascus Meridien hotel for meetings with Israel's fiercest Arab critic and his foreign minister. Over four days they will also be visiting the tomb of Saladin al-Ayoubi and the grave of Yousef el-Azmi, who led the doomed Syrian cavalry charge against French tanks at the battle of the Maysaloun Pass in 1920.

One can only imagine their thoughts when they are taken to the Nujah Martyrs' Cemetery in Damascus where thousands of Syrian military victims of the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars lie – all killed by the country whose passport the visitors now carry.

■ Beirut – The killing of four more civilians, including a mother and her two children aged four and 10, brought the south Lebanon "ceasefire" to near-total collapse yesterday, as the Hezbollah fired at least 40 Katyusha rockets at Israel's occupation zone in revenge for the killing of five of their members by Israeli troops earlier in the week.

In the space of 12 hours yesterday, a militiaman in Israel's South Lebanon Army was killed by a Hezbollah bomb, while Israel's return fire killed a farmer. The mother and her children died in the bomb ambush in Merkava.

Deputy prime minister Tim Fischer said Australia's future lay in the region, and his conservative government would not allow anyone to sabotage its lucrative trade relationships with its Asian neighbours. The Images of Australia unit headed by diplomats, will target Asian media and international news agencies to combat the image of Australia fuelled by Ms Hanson's prominence. It is the latest move by the foreign ministry to discredit Ms Hanson.

Mr Fischer said Canberra's regional diplomatic moves, such as its recent talks with Japan, were aimed at "not only boosting our relations but dealing with those elements who would sabotage and divide and destroy those trading relations. That is something internal to government, but it reflects a government getting on with the task of seeing Hanson off the stage."

The move follows a secret campaign by the foreign affairs department to discredit Ms Hanson, an independent politician, throughout the region.

Department sources said it had been ordered to run an anti-Hanson campaign, translating speeches and information discrediting her and giving it to foreign governments and media.

Prime Minister John Howard

and his Liberal-National government initially ignored Ms Hanson after she sparked a national race row last year, believing she would quickly return to obscurity. But her anti-immigration, anti-foreign investment and anti-Aboriginal welfare policies have struck a chord with voters worried by high unemployment and sluggish growth.



Eye of the storm: Pauline Hanson, whose extremism on immigration, foreign investment and welfare has struck a chord with voters

Photograph: Reuters

Australia declares war on the racist politician who is proving bad for business

Polls show support for her One Nation party at between 7 and 8 per cent – enough to make her the third force in domestic politics and deliver an influential bloc in parliament if that is maintained to the next election, due by mid-1999. She has also gained a high regional profile, with some polls showing she is better known than Mr Howard among Asian executives.

In Japan, comic strips have drawn the Hanson phenomenon into their story-lines, painting her as a racist damaging Australia's reputation and accusing Mr Howard of reviving racism in domestic politics. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer attacked Ms Hanson's policies during a speech in Singapore this week as "ethically reprehensible" and suicidal for Australian prosperity.

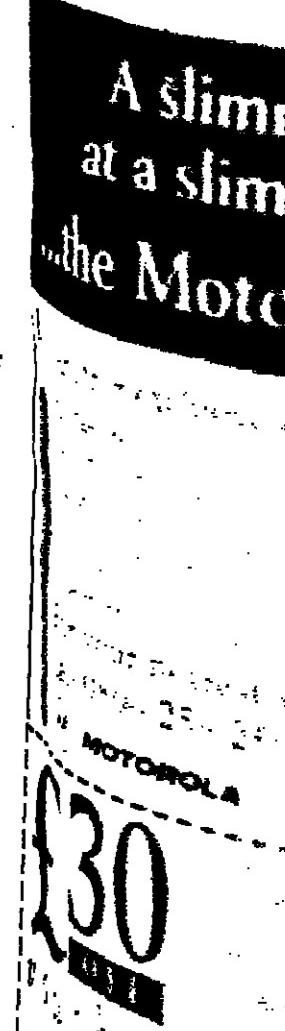
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RELAX



No help for refugees fleeing clouds of fire

Phil Davison
speaks to
victims of the
Montserrat
eruptions

St Peter's, Montserrat — Mary Irish, 87, born to slaves on a cotton plantation, is now in many ways worse off than when she was a child labourer during the First World War. She sleeps on the canvas of a wooden-framed cot, with no mattress, alongside 57 other women and children in the stone-floored Anglican Church of St Peter's. The stench of sweat is overwhelming.

As she told me her story yesterday, a siren wailed, telling us to blow again about four miles away, well within range of ash, gas and stones. But Mary was worried about only whether she would get bread for lunch as she had eaten no breakfast.

"Since we come here, we don't get nothin'. The government give us 100 dollars (£25) in food vouchers a month but I'm not a well woman. I can't walk far," she said. To our left was a rusty fridge, shared by all 58 refugees. To our right was the blue and white painted piano, now used as a cupboard.

Outside, a lean-to provided a single toilet. Down a slope of overgrown grass, among gravestones and beneath a crimson-blossoming Flamboyant tree, was a breezblock square serving as a cold water shower. On various gravestones, refugees sat and scrubbed clothes in plastic basins of water.

The scene was a pitiful example of how slow and disorganized Britain and the local government have been in pro-



viding decent conditions for the 1,300 homeless. Some have been put up in families in private homes; others are living in tents at a camp at Gerald's Bottom in the north. This week's regular eruptions, forcing evacuation of an earlier buffer zone, have made things far worse.

"I was in another church first, in Firth's, but they evacuate dat on Monday when de volcano blow again," said Mary, her head wrapped in floral cloth from the same curtain material as her dress. "Dey wouldn't even let me take my mattress. We no get time take nothing." On her feet are a pair of tattered, oversized basketball shoes her son James, living in England, brought her during his last trip several

years ago. Just after we spoke, the volcano blew. Mary did not venture outside to see the churning mushroom cloud of brown and grey gas and ash that surged from the crater.

But then the church was bombarded by a storm of pebbles that blacked out the sun. Birds flew wildly in panic and the volcano created what was like a heavy fall storm covering the entire island in a thick layer of what looked and felt like dry cement.

The refugees — some, like Mary, homeless for the two years since the volcano first erupted, have arranged the pews in squares to enclose their own "homes." Some have put up hospital-like screens for a degree of privacy. Against one inside wall,

42-year-old refugee Delores Henderson has managed to set up a wooden loom to weave cotton for clothes.

Sitting with me on a grave-

stone, housewife Linda Daley told me how the volcano's pyroclastic flow — an avalanche of red-hot gas and ash — nearly killed her on June 25 in Harris's

village. "I be washin' some clothes when dis stuff come up like a mighty sea," she said. "It don't make no noise. It come up with a mighty rushin' and I think

God was in that wind 'cos it blow away the heat. I got behind de school wall den I see fire over my head and my washbasin melt in front of me. I call up to Jesus and

say, Lord have mercy on me. "Now de government no help us at all. All dey give us is paper. I don't even have shoes so I can go to church. I suffocate wit de breath of the people here. I feel sick. Ask dem to get me a house, please."

Fifty yards below St Peter's Anglican church, the scenes are even more heart-rending. In a single-room former stone schoolhouse, 50 elderly or mentally ill refugees live and sleep on cots in what they call Scraps Memorial Centre. They call it because they all try to make basic handicrafts from scraps of cotton material.

In one corner, 104-year-old Isley Bob slumps over his cot, slurping rice for breakfast from a plastic bowl. In another, 7-year-old Elizabeth Francis, a tall, beautifully-spoken refugee from the township of St. Patrick's, swats flies from her 43-year-old physically and mentally-disabled son Melvin, crumpled in a cot and wearing a dust mask to keep off volcanic ash.

Truth commission faces Hague court

Mary Braid
Johannesburg

The families of murdered anti-apartheid activists are planning to challenge South Africa's controversial Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the International Court of Justice in the Hague over its right to grant amnesty to the perpetrators of human rights crimes.

The move follows the release this week of Dirk Coetzee, a self-confessed state assassin of ANC lawyer Griffiths Mxenge, who was stabbed 40 times and had his throat cut in 1981.

Mr Coetzee should have been sentenced today for the murder in Durban High Court but the TRC, a cornerstone of South Africa's negotiated transition to democracy, intervened on Monday by fast-tracking Mr Coetzee's amnesty application for Mr Griffiths' murder.

The commission, charged with exposing the truth about the apartheid era, has the power to offer amnesty to perpetrators in return for full disclosure of their crimes and proof they were politically motivated. The decision to grant

Mr Coetzee's amnesty is expected to be the first of many. Mr Coetzee, the former commander of the notorious apartheid-era Vlakplaas police hit squad, is today back at his desk at the National Intelligence Agency, now in the pay of the ANC government.

The ANC has looked after him since he defected to them in 1989 and blown the whistle on the murders and atrocities committed by the National Party's state security forces. Mr Mxenge's family see the ANC's support of Coetzee as a betrayal of a man who gave his life for the struggle.

Today, the Mxenge family will appeal to the Durban High Court to overturn the TRC's decision, though two other High Court challenges to the TRC have already failed.

Yesterday, Cyril Morolo, who last year represented the Mxenge family and others (including the relatives of murdered Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko) in a failed bid to have the TRC's amnesty provisions declared unconstitutional, said he was now taking the families' cases into the international arena. He said it was a pity they were "so full of hatred".

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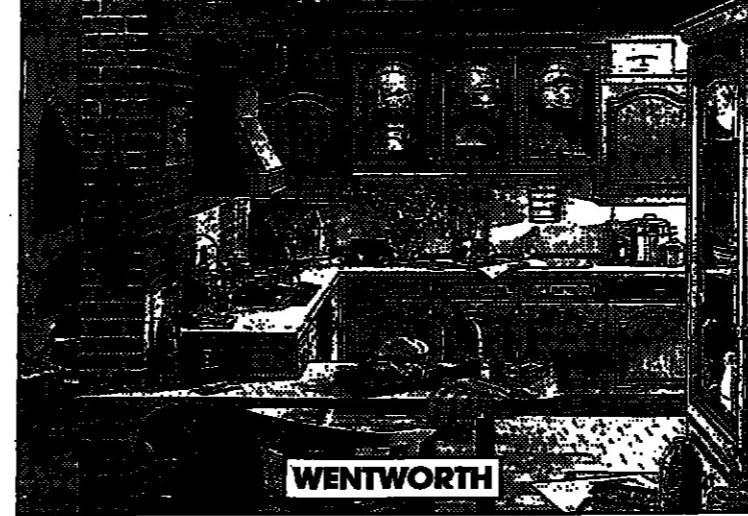
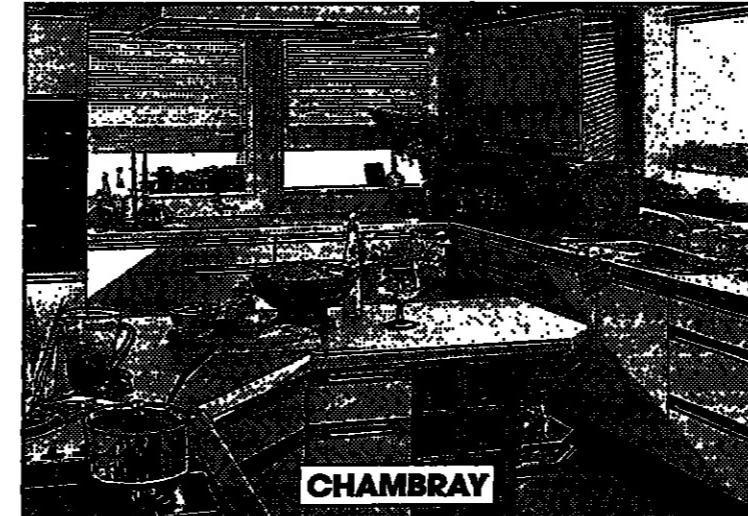
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international

Space odyssey: Repair crew dock at Russian craft as US celebrates successful Shuttle launch

Socket and spanner team join ailing Mir

Helen Womack
Moscow

Russia's cosmic repair men, Anatoly Solov'yov and Pavel Vinogradov, docked successfully yesterday with the orbiting station *Mir*, which has been running on half power since it was involved in a space collision two months ago. About an hour after their Soyuz TM-26 rocket locked onto to *Mir*, the new arrivals went through the hatch to an ecstatic welcome from the two Russians and the American waiting for them on board the station.

The outgoing crew, Vasily Tsibliev and Alexander Lazutkin of Russia and the British-born US physicist Michael Foale, had some bad news for the relief team, however. They had failed to repair *Mir*'s oxygen generating system, which broke down earlier this week, because they lacked a spare part.

All five spacemen will be able to breathe, as they have back-up canisters with enough oxygen for two months. But fixing the generator will be an added headache for the repair men, who also have to overcome the consequences of the crash on 25 June.

It was the worst accident on the 11-year-old station, which has suffered a string of technical failures because it has outlived its service life, originally intended to be no more than five years. During a manual docking operation, a Progress cargo rocket bumped into *Mir*'s scientific module, Spektr, rupturing it so that it had to be disconnected from the rest of the station. The task of the repair men will be to seal the hole and reconnect Spektr to the

mother craft, which they will start to do on 20 August.

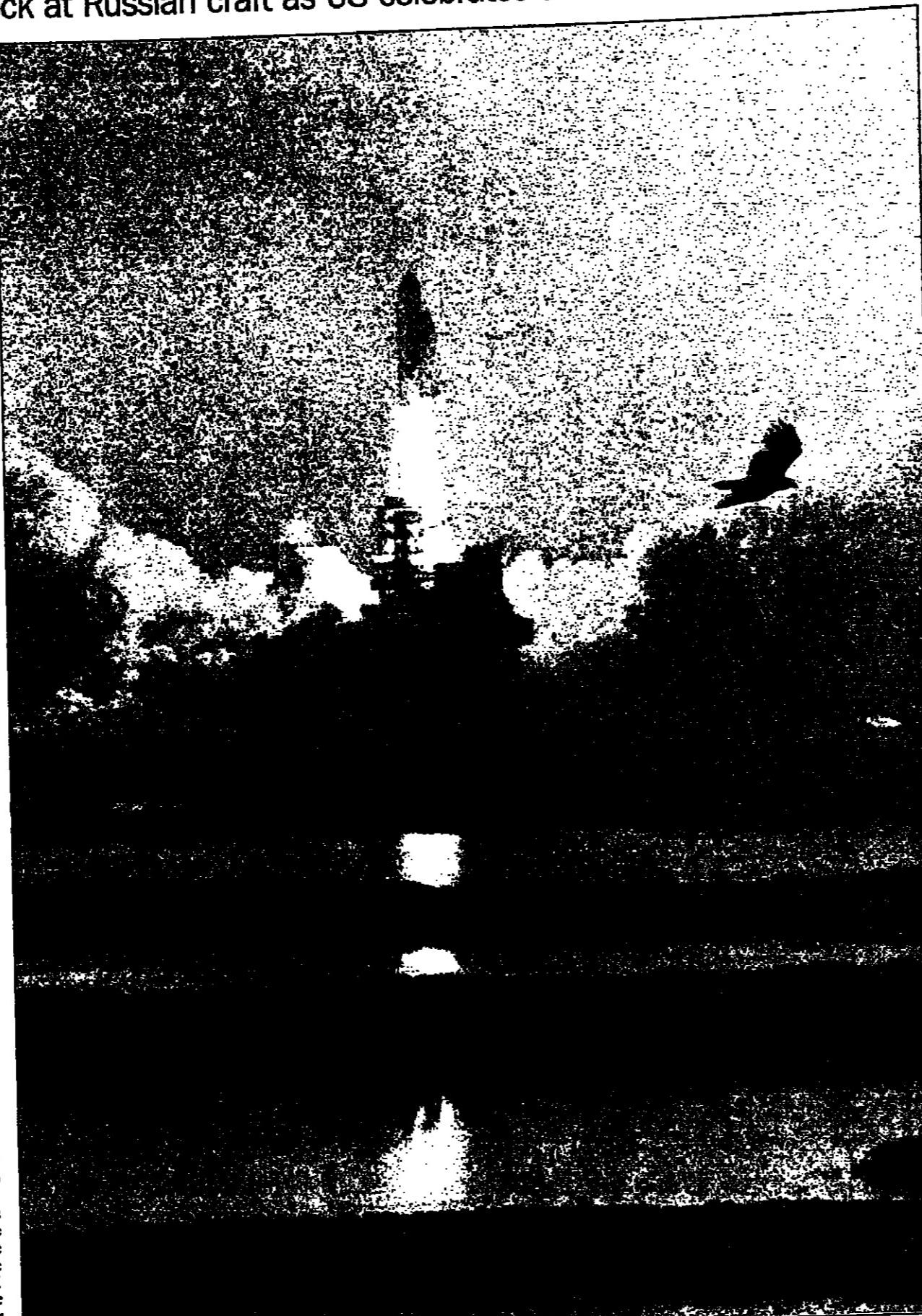
The job will be not only tricky but dangerous. Because Spektr is airless, the cosmonaut who enters it will have to wear a full space suit as if he were on a space walk. The passage into Spektr is extremely narrow and debris may be floating around inside. A puncture in the suit would be fatal.

Commander Solov'yov, at 49 a veteran with four missions and 456 days in space under his belt, will do the repairs while his flight engineer, Mr Vinogradov, will stand behind him holding a torch. Mr Vinogradov, on his first trip into space, was reported to have had a higher than normal pulse rate because of nerves during lift-off from the Baikonur launch pad on Tuesday but officials say he is settling down.

The latest mission is seen as crucial to the whole future of the Russian space programme. Moscow is hoping to exploit *Mir* for another two years. The United States is supporting Russia despite the mishaps because the two former rivals plan to have joint space station called Alpha by 2003.

However, the US space agency Nasa is reserving judgement about whether another US astronaut should replace Michael Foale when an *Atlantis* shuttle comes to pick him up from *Mir* next month.

The *Atlantis* will also bring the spare part needed to mend the oxygen system, a simple pipe which links the generator to the air intake. The old pipe is 11 years old and worn out like some part in a battered Lada car which, many ordinary Russians think, the once-prestigious *Mir* station now resembles.



Caught in flight: Space Shuttle *Discovery* lifts off from Cape Canaveral, Florida yesterday. The crew of six expect to stay in space for 11 days to carry out a scientific mission

Photograph: Pierre DuCharme/Reuters

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US envoy puts pressure on war criminals

Rupert Cornwell

Bidding to salvage the Dayton peace accords he brokered 21 months ago, Richard Holbrooke yesterday ratcheted up pressure on suspected war criminals at large in the former Bosnia by meeting with the two top US military commanders who would have to give their blessing to any move to arrest them.

On the second day of his visit to Bosnia, the special envoy conferred in the northern town of Tuzla with John Shalikashvili, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and General Wesley Clark, NATO's Supreme commander in Europe.

No details emerged, but the message was clear: the allies are in earnest with threats against suspects like the Bosnian Serb war leader, Radovan Karadzic, formally barred from office, but who none the less wields huge influence from his stronghold of Pale, east of Sarajevo.

Mr Holbrooke is the latest of

significant shorts

France holds ETA suspect

A Spaniard suspected of being the intelligence chief of the Basque separatist group ETA has been detained in southern France, police said yesterday. Igor Urestarazu Garro, a former policeman in the Spanish Basque region, was detained in Albi on Tuesday after a car chase and later taken to anti-terrorist police headquarters in Paris. Spanish police said Mr Urestarazu began intelligence work for ETA in Guipuzcoa and took on a major role after he fled to France three years ago.

Reuters - Paris

Oil spill halts sea sports

Police banned swimming, boating and fishing in the waters off two Normandy towns after fuel spilled from a tanker entering Le Havre. The port was temporarily sealed off to stop the slick from spreading.

On Wednesday, a Bahamas registered tanker hit the docks while trying to enter Le Havre, spilling about 120 tons of fuel.

AP - Le Havre

New co-premier for Cambodia

Cambodian Foreign Minister Ung Huot was appointed first prime minister yesterday, replacing the ousted Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Reuters - Phnom Penh

150 من الامان

envoy puts
pressure on
criminals

Will the doomsters please look at the figures

The mongers of doom are making rather a lot of noise about the state of the economy. Another quarter-point rise in interest rates and some commentators paint a picture of industrial collapse, rising unemployment and mortgage repossessions. This stew of gloom is overdone to the point of being burnt to the bottom of the pan. Yes, if you are with the Cheltenham and Gloucester your £50,000 mortgage will cost £9 a month more as a result of yesterday's rise in interest rates (other lenders are waiting and seeing). And yes, it will have gone up by £47 a month since the election – although, in many cases, the blow is softened by the society's windfall payout at some point over the past year.

It is also true that exporters are squeezing over our high interest rates, which have pushed the pound up to the sort of level that everyone agreed was totally unrealistic and unsustainable five years ago, when Britain was forced out of the European exchange rate mechanism. There is, of course, that advantage that if you are holidaying in France you can get 10 francs to the pound, which used to be a legend that grandfathers amazed small children with, along with amputations without anaesthetics and Labour governments – but that may not help all the people all the time.

And it is further true that we are in the middle of an overheated consumer boom of the kind that usually ends in

tears sooner or later – even though it is not fuelled by anything like the amount of borrowing which got people into trouble last time.

But look at the doomsters' case. Central is their criticism of Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for failing to take sufficiently bold action in his Budget to dampen consumer spending, leaving the authorities with the sole instrument of interest rates to control excessive growth in the economy. There is a pleasing symmetry to their argument. While the phrase "one-club golfer" was coined by Sir Edward Heath to describe Nigel Lawson's reliance on interest rates in the last boom, Mr Brown made it his own, and it formed the backbone of Labour's opposition to Conservative economic policy at this point in the last cycle. But symmetry is no substitute for analysis. The circumstances are not the same. And it is not true that Mr Brown is relying solely on interest rates, having conveniently shunted off both responsibility and blame for raising them to a newly independent Bank of England. Within the constraints of Labour's election pledges, Mr Brown raised taxes as much as he could in his Budget. In particular, the big increase in stamp duty on house sales over £100,000 and the advance notice of a further cut in the mortgage tax subsidy next April will help restrain house-price inflation. The wisdom of Labour's pledge not to raise income tax rates is being questioned re-

spectively by City scribblers who want more cash taken out of consumers' pockets, and by Roy Hattersley, Labour's Lord Bountiful, who wants to give more to the poor. But it is too late now: Labour made that promise for the right reasons, and the electorate has endorsed it emphatically.

Gavin Davies, one of the wisest of the City's wise persons, has written in our columns that if the Chancellor were to use taxes on the consumer as an economic lever, it would require massive rises to have any significant effect, and only then after a long lag. That was the reason for use of the tax system to fine-

tune the economy becoming discredited. The present clamour for such fiscal meddling is therefore puzzling.

Equally puzzling is the amount of attention that has been paid to the fact that there have now been as many as four rate rises since the election. But these have been quarter-point changes, and so the total rise since 1 May from 6 to 7 per cent amounts to a single percentage point, which itself was the standard unit of movement in the bad old days. It may not be comfortable for home-owners, but financially committed adults are surely old enough to remember when Norman Lamont put

rates up from 10 to 12 per cent in a day – and then threatened and withdrew a further rise to 15 per cent. The innovation of smaller but more frequent rate changes was one of the Conservatives' sensible responses to the uncertainty of economic futuology.

In any case, the criticism of the Government for hitting home-owners too hard contradicts the City lament that it has failed to clamp down hard enough on consumer spending. In his Budget speech, Mr Brown leaned towards the City's concerns. Peter Lilley, the shadow Chancellor, yesterday had the disgraceful cheek to criticise Mr Brown for "doing nothing to persuade people to save their building society windfalls", when action to stem the piggy-bank cascade was considered and rejected by the Tory government because it was desperate to stoke the feel-good factor before the election.

That is why interest rates have to rise now, but the rise in the pound that higher rates have encouraged may well obviate the need for further rises. What is more, it is replacing with a performance of *The Bible: The Complete Word of God (Abridged)*, which runs to 100 minutes, which suggests to a sceptical mind that further abridgement is possible. Before Mary Whitehouse breaks open the Appletise, however, she should note that the playwright responsible for *S&F*, Mark Ravenhill, is being touted as a scriptwriter for the next series of *This Life*. So he will have to drop the shopping, then.

workers and that recession is around the corner. But it should be remembered that they are in the minority.

Besides, by hinting that yesterday's rise was the last for the time being, thereby causing the pound to drop sharply on the foreign exchanges, the Bank of England might have managed to achieve exactly the policy mix that was required: higher interest rates and a lower pound.

The end of Life as we know it?

Good news for those who think there is too much filth on stage and screen. Last night saw the last episode of the cult soap *This Life*, with its high bonk rating. At the same time, the Reduced Shakespeare Company is ending its run of a play called *Shopping and Fucking* (good news for all those papers that have agonised over whether to print the full title). What is more, it is replacing with a performance of *The Bible: The Complete Word of God (Abridged)*, which runs to 100 minutes, which suggests to a sceptical mind that further abridgement is possible. Before Mary Whitehouse breaks open the Appletise, however, she should note that the playwright responsible for *S&F*, Mark Ravenhill, is being touted as a scriptwriter for the next series of *This Life*. So he will have to drop the shopping, then.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fair reward for all good teachers

Sir: The Government's proposal to pay enhanced salaries to "superteachers" can only be viewed as a silly gimmick in the context of the continuing inequalities in pay and other rewards in the system as a whole. If, as you say ("You can't afford to pay peanuts", Mr Blunkett, 6 August), "more money has to be part of the solution", is it too much to ask that further education lecturers of 16-19-year-olds share in this educational windfall?

Since 1993, lecturers in Britain's colleges whose conditions of service transferred from their former LEA employers have had their pay completely frozen. This was a government-inspired decision to force them to transfer to inferior contracts involving longer hours in the class room, fewer holidays and the requirement to teach more students with diminished resources. These staff include a fair percentage among their number that could qualify for the proposed new "advanced skills grade". They are unlikely to benefit from Mr Blunkett's proposals however, since their pay will remain frozen.

The situation for non-teaching managers in the further education sector could not be more different. Salary levels for Principals and other non-teaching senior staff have never been better. At over £80,000 per annum, plus perks such as cars, expense accounts and interest-free loans, the salary packages of these senior staff put those of the Prime Minister and Education Secretary in the shade.

The job requirements of all teachers and lecturers have changed and will continue to change over the years. A committee of inquiry, into pay, conditions of service, career development and prospects for all teachers, is the only way that a broad consensus can be reached on the future of the education service which is seen properly to reward good teachers while motivating all to reach for higher standards.

DAVID ROBINSON
*National Officer
Lecturers Employment Advice and Action Fellowship
Thorpe Bay,
Essex*

Sir: You make the assertion (Leading article, 6 August) that higher pay for teachers would result in more good teachers being recruited. This is only true up to a point.

Most teachers are not in it for the money; they are dedicated professionals, and those people whose interest is half-hearted are steered away from teaching by the poor pay.

The downside of higher pay for teachers ("Top pay plan for super teachers", 6 August) might be that those less-dedicated individuals, who had up until now been dissuaded by the low pay, find that they are interested in teaching simply because the remuneration is higher.

Obviously I am not against higher pay for teachers; it is well known that over the last 20 years teachers' pay has not increased as much as comparable jobs in industry. As a newly qualified teacher, my first year's pay is not going to be particularly impressive. I am most certainly not in it for the money.

IAN HERRIES
Leeds



Disabled actors deserve a chance

Sir: Thomas Sutcliffe is wrong on several counts ("Tabloid", "Last night", 4 August). Channel 4's new sitcom, *House Gang*, was never intended to "confront discrimination", nor is it primary purpose educational.

This series is in the best tradition of Aussie soap/sitcom – it's lightweight, a little tacky, but it's also warm, entertaining and engaging. Yes, the acting might be stilted in places, the script a mite rough around the edges, but these are wrinkles that can be ironed out in the second series.

In his desperate attempts to write a sweetly reasonable, politically correct review Mr Sutcliffe misses the point, which is that *House Gang* is groundbreaking television for the first time people with disabilities are portrayed in a mainstream sitcom and – wow – they are not the usual stereotypical type, the superheroes battling against the odds, the bitter self-pitying no-hopers, the villains or the bad guys.

Trev, Belinda and Robert are, as Mr Sutcliffe concedes,

"competent" and "sassy". They are fully rounded characters, in control of their lives, and throughout the series they are shown coping with ordinary everyday ups and downs, traumas and irritations that anyone – disabled or not – might encounter when sharing a house.

Disabled people are tired of always being defined by disability, medical condition or narrow doorways. Most disabled people are disabled by attitudes, not physical barriers, and all we want is to be given the same chances in life

as everyone else – including the chance to train for, to audition for, and to perform in mainstream drama on the same terms as able-bodied actors. And that means the same terms, Mr Sutcliffe – so you reckon *House Gang* is one of the worst-acted, least funny comedies ever broadcast? Where have you been looking? I've seen many more terrible performances gracing our screens – all of them from able-bodied actors and writers.

Nobody out there is writing scripts that include disabled characters, nobody is casting disabled actors in sitcoms or soaps, or any other type of drama. The Aussies were determined enough to do it for themselves. I'm proud that Channel 4 gave its support to their determination and now I'm waiting for British writers to follow their lead.

ALISON WALSH
*Disability Consultant
Channel 4
London SW1*

Enforce law for young drinkers

Sir: I was not surprised to read that the JD Wetherspoon pub chain, after carefully checking it would not hit their profits, has succumbed to the latest moral panic and is banning alcopops from its pubs ("Pub group calls time on alcopops", 5 August). It is an easy way out of dealing with the real problem of under-age drinking, where

currently the police, off-licences and publicans are colluding together to allow the law to be flouted with impunity.

Go into any city or town on a Friday or Saturday night and you can see the 15-18 age group being served in pubs and 13 and 14-year-olds drinking outside McDonald's or its local analogue. Law without enforcement is as much use as a bicycle to a fish.

When did your local paper last report a publican convicted for serving an under-age drinker? This would do more to reduce alcohol consumption amongst the young. The current campaign is about as useful as dealing with road safety by getting Lada dealers to promise not to sell Ferraris to their customers.

GLYN FORD MEP
(Lab, Greater Manchester East)
*Mossley
Lancashire*

Missing monarch

Sir: If Prin Irvine's grandmother is 104 ("Tabloid", "When Mummy dearest hits 100", 6 August), she has lived in six reigns – not the five asserted by Prin.

Queen Victoria was proud of her record 64 years on the British throne. She would not have been amused to have been forgotten by Prin, who, at 40, has lived – so far – under only one monarch (albeit one with an eye firmly fixed on "the old queen's" record).

MARGOT THOMPSON
*Rochdale, Greater Manchester
London EC4*

Praying for the right service

Sir: Your correspondents the Rev Simon Reed (Letters, 30 July) and the Rev Dr Stephen Cherry (Letters, 1 August) assert that many ministers of religion render "true and rewarding" funerals and listen "carefully and skilfully" to those arranging funerals.

No doubt this is true in many cases, but the Prayer Book Society often hears complaints that some vicars totally disregard requests made to them for church funerals according to the Book of Common Prayer.

Nor does the problem apply only to funerals. In one parish where a Book of Common Prayer marriage service had been expressly stipulated, the incumbent embarked on an alternative, modern form of service. It is impossible to overstate the distress this caused to members of the families concerned.

It needs to be more widely known that at the "occasional services", ie baptisms, marriages and funerals, it is the legal right of the families concerned to stipulate for a service according to the Book of Common Prayer, or the Alternative Services Book, and the legal duty of the priest to meet their needs. Otherwise, the church is short-changing its customers.

MARGOT THOMPSON
*Prayer Book Society
London EC4*

Qualified to be a hero

Sir: I am entirely in agreement with Captain Jones, the pilot of the aircraft which forced landed at Manchester Airport ("Hero pilot flies sky of praise", 7 August).

If he is a hero, as the media and others maintain, it does not say very much for the training and proficiency of British Airways pilots. They rightly describe the incident as routine emergency drill. The one wheel landing was within the competence of any qualified airline or air force pilot and to suggest otherwise must wrongly damage people's confidence in British Airways.

PAUL GODDARD
*(Ex RAF pilot)
Polruan-by-Fowey, Cornwall*

Border incidents

Sir: Space may well be the final frontier, as Captain Kirk used to say, but the River Tamar surely can't be the "oldest frontier in Europe", as the errant Paul Kelley would have us believe, if its borderline credentials were only established in the 9th century ("A Journey Around the Whole Island of Great Britain", 6 August).

"Iacta alea est", quoth Julius Caesar as he crossed the Rubicon – and the boundary dividing republican loyalty from imperial ambition – and that was in 49BC. And, while we're talking crossings, what about the time the Red Sea divided for those fleeing Israelites. Another international border incident surely?

KATIE TEARLE
Lewes, East Sussex

Casting for a white Othello

Sir: David Lister's article ("Can it be wrong to 'black up' for Othello?", 7 August) about casting Othello attributes the reluctance of theatre companies to cast white actors in the role in part to political correctness.

In America, the home of political correctness, there have been experiments with casting black actors as Iago as well as Othello. But the most radical solution so far will be tried next month in Washington at the Shakespeare Theatre, probably America's finest Shakespeare company. Patrick Stewart will play Othello, but he will be the only white actor in the cast. It may strike some as nothing more than a gimmick, but as a way of exploring how race functions in the play it seems to me a brilliant idea.

PETER HOLLAND

Trinity Hall, Cambridge

Olden Delicious

Sir: Your article on gene manipulation of apples (2 August) left a taste in my mouth worse than that of a French Golden Delicious.

I have pleasant memories of the days (before the EEC) when Golden Delicious were delicious: honey-sweet, fragrant, easy to eat and a treat. I don't think my children know what an apple tastes like; they refuse to eat them.

You say that the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale houses a massive resource of "more than 4,000 varieties"; my apples of 30 years ago must be there somewhere. Why aren't we using them?

JOANNA CLARKE
Glasgow

analysis

A strike at the heart of Nirvana

Low inflation, full employment, record stock markets – but, says

Mary Dejevsky, American workers are footing the bill.

Are they about to stop paying?

The United States, which is currently acknowledged to have the strongest and soundest economy in the industrialised world, has, since Monday, been in the grip of its biggest strike for 14 years. The transport and courier company, United Parcel Service, whose ubiquitous brown vans with their subdued gilt lettering deliver 80 per cent of the US small package freight, is at a standstill. Some 190,000 unionised workers – two-thirds of the workforce – have withdrawn their labour, more than 12 million packages and mail-ordered goods (which because of the distances and paucity of local shops in the US, account for a massive volume of business) are piled up in depots. An estimated 5 per cent of the country's gross national product, according to UPS, is "not moving".

In the US, as in Britain, a strike of this magnitude and disruptive potential seems a historical throwback to a pre-

Thatcher, pre-Reagan era – before unions were tamed, managers learnt to manage, and workers understood that times had changed. And this is one way the UPS strike is viewed: as an aberration, a last gasp of the Teamsters, one of the few strong trade unions in the US, in one of the few sectors – haulage – where it still has clout. If this is true, the strike will be short-lived, a little more of the Teamsters' remaining power will have been spent, and the strikers – with a few meagre gains and much lost pay – will return to work, grateful still to have a job.

But another interpretation is also possible. According to this, the UPS strike would not be a vestige of the past, but a harbinger of the future and a warning that all is not as right with the country's economy as mainstream economic analysts and most US politicians would have us believe.

At present, the very strength of the economy seems to argue against this. Over the past year,

the US has achieved a combination of positive indicators that had, hitherto, been regarded as virtually impossible for any developed country. Unemployment falls by the month, and is currently at its lowest since November 1973. Welfare rolls are also falling as rules in many states are tightened. The inflation rate, meanwhile, is negligible and – despite repeated predictions to the contrary – still shows no sign of budging. Interest rates are at their lowest for many years, encouraging mortgage borrowings and consumer spending. Company profits are by and large at record levels, so are exports, and the dollar is strong

against all major currencies. Perhaps the most surprising indicator has been share prices, which are still breaking records for any developed country. As they rose, one analyst or other would forecast that they could go no higher – but they did. And now, the word is that they could rise higher still. The logic is that there are simply no serious negative factors to dent market confidence. On top of all this, President Clinton has just finalised an agreement with Congress, which has a Republican majority, on a budget plan designed to help the boom continue and eliminate the domestic budget deficit by the year 2002.

All in all, the US economy in 1997 seems to many to have reached a state akin to Nirvana, where all the variables are in balance, harmony prevails, and each positive indicator reinforces the other. So strong does the US economy appear that even the professional Eeyore of the financial establishment, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, was compelled to sound a rare note of optimism when he appeared before a Congressional committee last month – helping to push the stock market even higher.

Perversely, it seems that only a surfeit of good news is capable of clouding the picture, and that only temporarily. The last unemployment figures, which showed a further fall to a

national rate of 4.8 per cent, caused a brief fall in the stock market as, not for the first time, dealers feared that a shortage of labour could increase wages and so inflation. The stock market, though, may have a point. It is pay, or at least one aspect of pay, that lies behind the UPS strike, and this is why the strike could be at least as much a pointer to the future as a throwback to the past. UPS workers are protesting about the increasing use by UPS of part-time, temporary staff, who are paid half as much as full-time employees and qualify for fewer benefits, including the all-important health insurance. The Teamsters union wants UPS to increase the number of benefits for part-timers, and each positive indicator reinforces the other. So strong does the US economy appear that even the professional Eeyore of the financial establishment, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, was compelled to sound a rare note of optimism when he appeared before a Congressional committee last month – helping to push the stock market even higher.

UPS says that it needs the flexibility of part-time working. It also says that pay for part-timers, at just short of \$10 an hour, almost twice the minimum wage, is respectable. (Full-timers earn twice that.) But although UPS is regarded as a good employer, a single breadwinner would still find it difficult to support a family on this salary. For a part-timer

working – as the full-timers claim – almost full-time hours, it is impossible – especially as the temporary nature of the employment makes it difficult for the individual to obtain a mortgage or any other form of the credit on which so many Americans run their lives.

The workers' complaints are sharpened by the contradiction they perceive between their own situation and the paucity of the US economy (as well as record company profits), they hear and read of every day. Essentially, inflation remains low, in part, because wages – despite the very low unemployment rate – are barely rising, and they are rising least for the lowest paid.

This is producing a groundswell of resentment and a readiness to strike that is uncommon for the US. Last month, General Motors had to suspend work at several plants because of a strike by parts manufacturers over layoffs. The company's policy of "just-in-time" production, where a minimum of components are stored, made the strike more effective than it might have been in the past, and a settlement was agreed within days.

Optimists about the US economy stress that the car and haulage industries are unusual in having strong unions and that widespread labour unrest is highly unlikely. The recent tightening of welfare regulations will make unem-

ployment even harder to bear than it was before, so most low-paid workers will probably just grin and bear it.

This will not, however, prevent frustrations being vented in other ways – none of which would be good either for the social climate or the prosperity of the US. There is already a tendency to blame immigrants (legal and illegal, and mainly from south of the border) for depressing wages, a trend that brought the referendum vote in California two years ago to abolish benefits – including health and education – for children of illegal immigrants. This year the same tendency almost caused legal immigrants to be excluded from health benefits until they became US citizens.

The much-contested North American Free Trade Agreement – Nafta – is also being blamed, for having encouraged US manufacturers to shift production to Mexico, where labour is cheaper, so reducing wages in the US, especially in border areas. The official Administration line is that Nafta has had no perceptible effect on wages in the US. Figures supplied by states bordering Mexico, however, tell a different story, and – even as President Clinton was celebrating his "balanced budget" agreement with Congress – he quietly signed over additional financial assistance to those states to safeguard jobs.

Elsewhere in the US, hostil-

The price of economic growth? Two-thirds of UPS staff are striking over pay in the biggest US dispute for 14 years. Photograph: AP

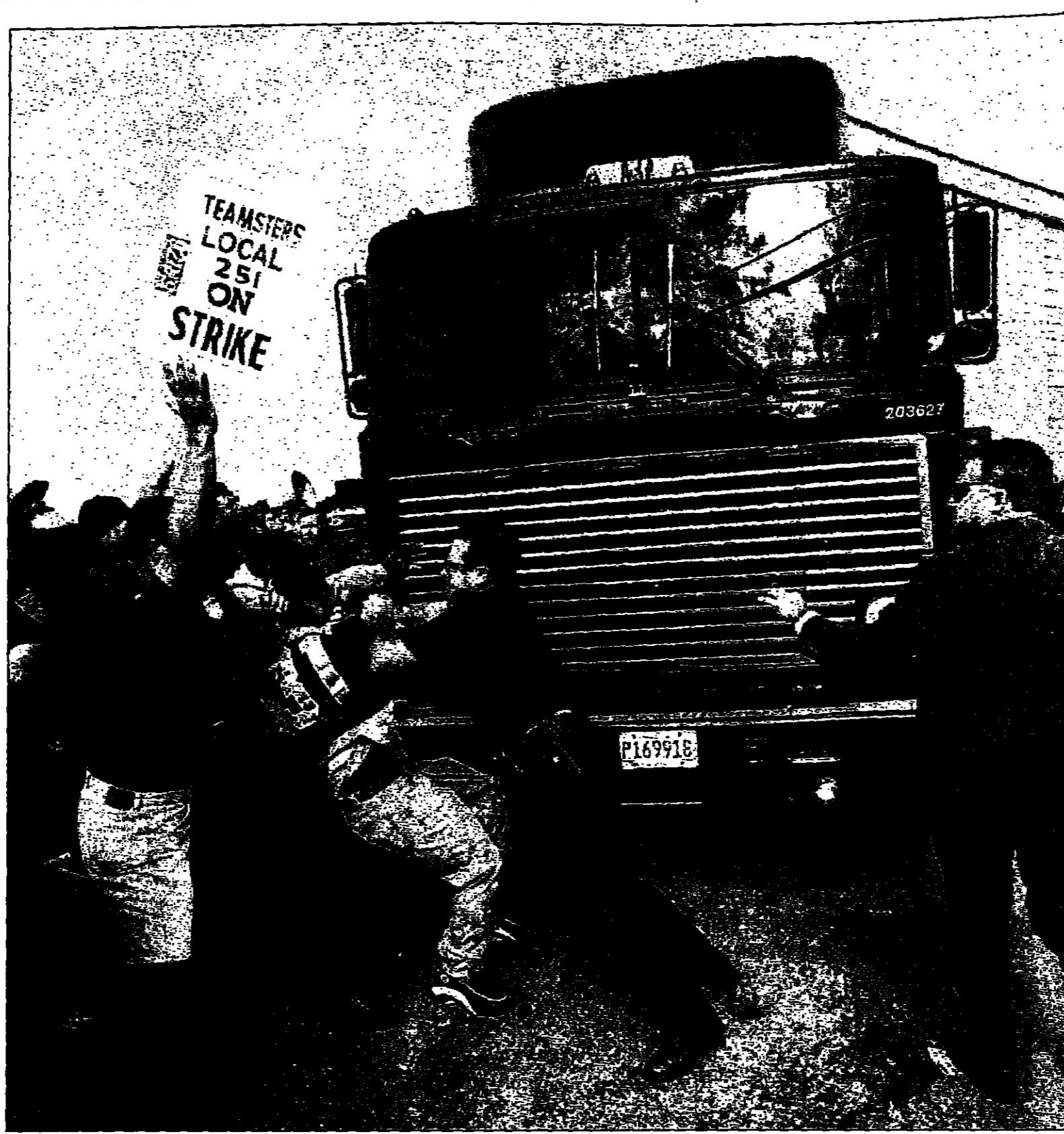
ity is growing towards former welfare recipients who are increasingly being made to work for their benefits, for pay which works out at less than the minimum wage. Again, despite official denials and insistence that safeguards are in place, there is evidence of a "displacement" effect, with employers letting full-timers go because "welfare" recipients are cheaper. Mr Clinton's call for states to ensure that this does not happen indicates that the situation is far from satisfactory. Overall, there is the likelihood of increased sullenness in the low-paid, unskilled workforce that could impair productivity, quality and reliability.

These are not the only dangers that may be foreshadowed by the UPS strike. The cause of the protest – low wages and growing "casualisation" of the workforce – illustrates that the supposedly perfect balance of the economy is, in fact, precarious. If labour becomes even scarcer, wages may have to increase, with the accompanying risk of higher inflation. If, as a result, production costs rise, companies – reluctant to cut profits – could decide to cut staff. Despite all the "downsizing" of the past decade, there still seems plenty of slack in many sectors compared with Britain.

More people have been employed in the US, up until now, in part because hiring and firing is easier and unskilled wages are low. But productivity (per employed worker) is also relatively low. Despite new technology, it has not increased nearly as rapidly in the past 25 years as it has in Europe. This discrepancy, which has tended to be masked by different methods of calculating productivity – with Europe counting only those employed and the US counting everyone of working age – is suddenly the subject of much specialist debate in the US.

If there is another wave of "downsizing" – and this was the cause of the recent General Motors strike – unemployment could also rise. This might not just damage the economic picture; it could also sorely test the welfare reforms whose success so far has relied on the economic boom and the availability of jobs.

These are hypothetical scenarios. The US economy may continue to boom, companies and consumers may continue to benefit from cheap imports and cheap labour, and low-paid workers may have no choice but to accept what they are given and strive, in the all-American way, for something better. What the UPS strike does illustrate, however, is that the economic boom has not spread its largesse nearly as widely as is often believed and that a small push from below could bring its Nirvana-dreaming economists crashing back to earth.



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£10,000 - £9,999	4.000	3.200
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£250,000 - £999,999	4.875	3.900
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Superfluous maybe, but very highly specified

Last Sunday the Innovations mail-order catalogue dropped out of the surrounding newspaper and onto the floor, with a pleasant and inviting thwock. So I threw the paper away (who wants to read yet another bloody cult-trailing article about *This Life* anyway), and read the catalogue. Soon I was lost in another, better world; a world in which any problem – no matter how small – could be solved.

"A breakthrough in home treatment of spots and cold sores?" I read. In the accompanying picture is something long and knobby, with a red bit at the end; something looking remarkably like ET's healing finger. So tell us, catalogue, what it does, exactly? Well, it "employs the bio-stimulating effects of low-intensity narrow-band light at a wavelength of precisely 660 nanometres in order to stimulate fibroblast proliferation and mediators of wound repair and inflammatory process healing". Sorry? In layman's terms it is designed to have a beneficial effect on facial spots. And it only costs

£29.95. Which is an amazing bargain for something that is probably done in hospitals with a machine costing two million quid.

What's next? "The height of glove technology". Ye-es, now I can see why the Explorer currently bumbling about on Mars is the height of space technology. But what is meant by "glove technology"? Well, these particular gloves are made out of special substances, cunningly bonded together. There is 'Laslan' (as worn in CS Lewis books, presumably), a "layer of PORELLE", and – finally – a stratum of "Thinsulate – the advanced thermal insulator". Put them together, and you have something equally handy that dog-sledding in Greenland or putting out the rubbish on a cold day.

Which brings us on to "Maximum performance outdoor headwear", a slightly nerdy looking object which is "technically specified for seriously chilly polar conditions" (thus distinguishing itself from caps that function only in frivolous chilliness), and is constructed out of "Tactel fabric, coated with Rainlife 2000 and

you push the top, slides open to reveal a compartment within which your spare keys are hidden. Simple!

But hold on a moment. This catalogue is only seen by about five million people, some of whom are likely to be burglars, or to know burglars. Pretty soon the information that thermometers are being used as handy places for hiding the keys to houses stuffed full of jewellery, videos and tempting catalogue products, will be common knowledge in the prisons and borstals. Giving up their hunt under bricks, stones and gnomes, Britain's housebreakers will zero in on thermometers.

The resulting mercury-busting crimewave would piss almost everybody off: those who already hide their keys in their thermometers, those who have thermometers with no keys in them, and those who buy thermometers especially to put their keys in.

Which is why the manufacturers have fitted the key compartment with a three-digit combination lock. And all those very absent-minded folk – who habitually shut themselves out of their houses – have to do is to

remember the three digits. Or – if they should forget – to hide a slip of paper, with the numbers written on, somewhere near the door. In a thermometer, perhaps. Meanwhile I hope others will enjoy the "use anywhere Mini Backscratcher" (just lie down with this carefully crafted beechwood appliance in the bus tube, cinema or aeroplane), will benefit from the "efficient and hygienic blackhead removal" gadget, take comfort from the Denpal NightGuard which fits into your mouth and stops you grinding your teeth at night, and will economise by getting the most out of their tubes of toothpaste with the "Squeezit".

And, before you ask, yes, I have bought stuff from this catalogue myself before. It's just that my purchases were more sensible and practical than many of the items that I have mentioned. My partner agrees that she has benefited enormously from the "one-eye-at-a-time" make-up glasses, with independently hinged, flip-up lenses. Which "fold away like normal specs when not in use". Miles Kingston is on holiday



David Aaronovitch

150

One hundred days can be a short time in politics

The original "100 days" concept was borrowed by Harold Wilson from Jack Kennedy. Four months before the 1964 election Wilson had mused that the incoming Labour government would have to do what JFK had done "after years of stagnation in the United States. He had a programme of hundred days - a hundred days of dynamic action." There was, however, no glitz 100-day press conference in January 1965 of the sort that John Prescott and Peter Mandelson, representing a Prime Minister enjoying his Tuscan holiday, will give today. What was actually happening at the 100-day mark was that the pound had been in free-fall, the foreign secretary had lost his career in a catastrophic by-election defeat in Leyton, the majority was down to three, and the question of every minister's lips was "how long will we last?"

They were saved, in large part, by the death of Winston Churchill, on the 99th day, an event which dissolved Parliament for a week and gave it the respite the exhausted government needed. With that wonderful self-preoccupation that is still characteristic of almost every top politician, Richard Crossman, engulfed in a now long-forgotten row of his own, noted in his diary that the national mourning for the century's greatest Prime Minister "should make things easier for me in this mortgage affair. If we had had the debate on Wednesday I should have had some explaining to do."

But by any standards, the Blair government has quite a lot to celebrate. Even the setbacks seem paltry by comparison. The failure to gain Uxbridge pales beside the gruesome loss of Leyton; the export-threatening value of the pound is still a better problem to have than the sterling crisis that engulfed Wilson in the winter of 1964-5. There isn't much sign, apparently, that even the raggednesses of the past 10 days or so has seriously dented the Government's popularity. An electorate that voted this government so spectacularly into office is still, to judge by the known polls, willing to trust it.

And so, so far, it has. You can't accuse a government that has surgically amputated the middle-class perk of free university tuition, gambled on the concessions needed to secure a new IRA ceasefire, and raised a £5bn windfall tax from the utilities for the explicit purpose of reintroducing the hopelessly unemployed and unemployable into the labour market, as over-cautious. The latter measure, particularly, gives the lie to the notion that the Labour programme is merely a matter of making a "Tory free market work better than it did."

And for all the justified unease about the control-freak mentality at the heart of the new Whitehall, this hasn't looked like a government shy about sharing power. The directly elected mayor of London, who will have vastly more people voting for him personally than any other politician in Britain, will be a big figure, probably more famous than all but a handful of cabinet ministers. He will get irritatingly under the feet of the Prime Minister. So, too, will the Scottish first minister. It used to be a truism that ex-chancellors were invariably in favour of surrendering control of interest rates to an independent central bank, but that serving ones never were. Brown has broken that rule. Blair



Donald Macintyre

Sure, to be fully tested, Blair needs a real crisis, but there are still ample grounds for satisfaction in San Gimignano

arrogance that ministers kept commendably up before election, tends to seep out here and there now it's over. The problem, now happily resolved, of Lord Simon wasn't that he was remotely dishonest or even as a minister anything but an asset. It was that some of his colleagues temporarily failed to see that if he had been a Tory hanging onto his shares, he would have been extinguished by Labour, a victim of those very standards set by the party in opposition. Press manipulation, appropriate in winning elections, isn't always as useful to the slow and lasting building of a reputation in government. There are decisions boldly made, but whose consequences are still in the future, like the one to create the millennium dome. And the tragic death in Paisley of the MP Gordon McMaster has exposed what threatens to be a crisis in the Labour Party in the west of Scotland - one which will have to be confronted before the process of selecting candidates for the new Scottish Parliament begins in earnest. And so on.

But there are still ample grounds for satisfaction in San Gimignano. Sure, to be fully tested Blair needs a real crisis, of the sort Wilson faced all too early, and that Thatcher chronically had in the first two years of office as she battled with her Cabinet over the central tenets of her economic policy. But the 100 days have kept alive the new, and surprisingly solid, hopes invested by the electorate in politics. It's entirely healthy, for example, that Gordon Brown should take the trouble to argue in public with Roy Hattersley about their differing views of what equality means. It's not a new debate, but what has changed is that when Brown says that Labour's task is to reunite a divided society, he now has the chance to prove he's right.

by Charles Arthur

Imagine if the Reverend Ian Paisley were to appear on a video screen at Sinn Fein's next conference, to announce that he had taken a seat on its controlling council. Or the reverse - Gerry Adams being inducted as a priest into the Protestant Church and hailed by Paisley as the great saviour of the Unionist cause.

Amazing? Unlikely?

Of course. But that gives you some idea of the frisson that ran through the crowd of programmers - who take computers every bit as seriously as some people take religion - at Apple's MacWorld conference in Boston when the luminous, grinning, giant face of Bill Gates, head of Microsoft, appeared, and told them that his company had bought \$150m worth of non-voting stock in the company.

The crowd hissed and booed. One would have expected at least that somebody would have stood up with a heavy object and hurled it at the video screen, to shatter the ghastly vision of Microsoft's triumph over a company which has always had the better ideas, but has consistently failed in that vital field - marketing.

That image of smashing the monolith, was the one that Apple chose in 1984 to push its "windows-based" PCs over the perceived tyranny of IBM, which since 1982 had dominated the market for corporate PCs. But Apple chose the wrong target. It should have been attacking the software, not the hardware. For in the 1980s, the corporations did stop buying IBM - but they bought cheaper machines which could still do all the same things as the IBM ones, because they ran the same software, written by Microsoft.

Yet the surprising thing about this week's announcement (if the two warring, neo-religious sides can be brought together without Mo Mowlam having to be parachuted in to act as peace-keeper) is that in the long run, the real beneficiaries might be you and I, rather than just Bill Gates.

We might in future get computers which have the same look and do all the things we really want, at a price that we want. For Microsoft might even find it useful to incorporate some of the most useful aspects of Apple's operating system such as the seamless nature of its operation, the look and feel of the "desktop" on the screen, the way it handles files, its insistence that every program follows certain "Human Interface Guidelines", established by ergonomists rather than programmers.

Why don't we have that linked, because Gates needs Apple to survive.



Crunch time: Apple co-founder Steve Jobs dwarfed by a video-linked Gates at the MacWorld Expo, Boston Photo: Reuter

already? Because Apple had the good ideas, but Microsoft had the muscle. The two have always been arch-rivals, incompatible: you can't put Apple software on to a machine that runs Microsoft's Windows operating system, and you can't run Windows on an Apple machine. They're water, oil, chalk and cheese, Tom and Jerry. Yet now they're strangely

Effective? Certainly. Gary Kildall, founder of Digital Research, wrote bitterly in his memoirs, "I have grown up in this industry with Gates. He is divisive. He is manipulative. He is a user. He has taken much from me and the industry."

Sneaky?

That doesn't concern Gates. His real worry, and his most significant fight, has been against the US Department

There is a perception (reinforced by Microsoft's huge marketing operation) that it never makes mistakes. That's entirely untrue. But Gates knows that it's better to make a lot of decisions quickly, correcting as you go, than to move slowly and correctly. Much is often made of his wealth, based on his stock value. People assume he's thus in it for the money, that he wants to own the world.

From meeting and interviewing him, and watching him operate for more than 14 years, I would say that actually he doesn't care about money. What he wants is for the world to agree that he's always right, and get itself in order so that what he thinks turns out to be right.

His vision of the future, as depicted in his book *The Road Ahead*, is dull and full of platitudes, lacking the sparkle of diversity and danger that real endeavour encourages. But perhaps Gates doesn't want the world to be like that. Steve Jobs, one of Apple's founders, who is now back on its board, and one of the architects of this week's deal, told the shocked audience: "We have to let go of the notion that for Apple to win, Microsoft must lose." To really fit Bill Gates's world, we should let go of the idea that Microsoft can lose. The question is, will we win too?

Microsoft and Apple have always been arch-rivals, yet now they're strangely linked, because Gates needs Apple to survive

was always strangely tardy in writing programs that could run on them. MS-DOS versions were always there first - even though the software and the operating system are written in different parts of the company.

But though Microsoft years ago won the commercial battle, it couldn't win the ideas battle. Apple was years ahead in offering an operating system for a personal computer which relied on "windows" - a "Graphical User Interface", or GUI - rather than one based around typing commands and file names at a blinking prompt (known as the "Command Line Interface", or CLI).

CLIs are what you see in films to denote behemoth machines. The blank screen's blinking cursor immediately suggests that the machine behind it is both complicated, unfriendly to the user (unless you know the magic words), it

ment of Justice's anti-trust lawyers, who have investigated Microsoft's near-monopoly of the desktop several times.

Without Apple, Microsoft would be a logical target for a break-up on monopoly grounds. A three-way split, into an operating system company, an application software (such as word processing and spreadsheets) company, and an internet software company would be logical. It would destroy the empire Gates has worked so intensely to create. Therefore, keeping Apple alive is utterly in his interest.

PLEASE HELP THIS DOG TO FLY

It's his only chance of escape. He's trapped in a desolate landscape of ash and rock. Chained to the ruins of his owner's house. There's nothing to eat. Nothing to drink. And the volcano that destroyed his home is still active.

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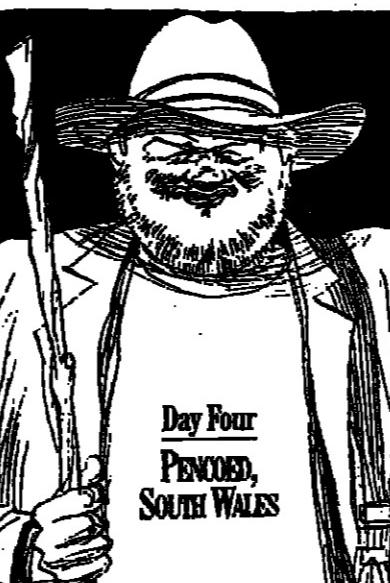
Wales: home of the Japanese boyo

There was no one in the bar who was not Japanese when I arrived at the Maerdy Hotel in the village of Pencoed. Though the hills behind it were those which demarcate the edge of the valleys of South Wales, in my neat little bedroom there was a notice which informed guests that, on channel 5, Japanese television was available. Downstairs in the dining room the menu insisted on chips with everything, yet everyone in the dining room was eating rice with their gammon or steak. Everyone here, too, was Japanese. Beneath it all ran the surreal soundtrack of the hotel's piped music in which a Johnny Cash soundalike was singing "The City of New Orleans".

I had expected the train from Newport to be a local shuttle on a sleepy Welsh branch line at the end of my journey from Cornwall. But I had misread the geography and the local economy considerably. The train which pulled up was a long Intercity and the line along which it travelled - I was later to discover when I found that my bedroom was well within earshot of the railway - was busy all day and night with heavy freight carriage as well as passenger expresses. This was the line which joins Cardiff to Bridgend, Port Talbot and Swansea. Once it had carried the coal and steel that were carried through the veins of the heartland of industrial Wales. But things have changed.

The centre of the nearby town of Bridgend, where I had alighted, looks like any unremarkable British small town, with its small branches of the usual chain stores and its unprepossessing local shops. But its fringes tell another story. Along its

A JOURNEY AROUND THE WHOLE ISLAND OF GREAT BRITAIN



WITH PAUL VALLEY

rude thing to do." There followed half an hour of serious briefing.

"Is there anyone I could practice on?" I asked at the end. The next day I was due down the road at Diaplastics UK, a Mitsubishi-owned injection-moulding company that makes the plastic cases for TV sets. He looked around. No, the early birds were already in bed. And the late ones were not back yet.

"Many of them are out at 7.30am and not in till midnight," he said. "Recently I had one check in after a three-hour ride to Tokyo airport, 13-hour flight to Heathrow, a train to Reading, another train to Bridgend and then a taxi here. He arrived at midnight and asked for a 6.30am breakfast so he could be at his workstation by 7.30am. They are hard workers."

By way of compensation he took me backstairs to the kitchen to show off the Japanese rice steamer that one of his long-term guests had donated to the hotel kitchen. "We now serve Japanese rice for breakfast too," he said, pulling out a large sack of the stuff. "I had to go a long way to get it - to Cardiff," he said, extracting a handful of the short, stout grains that produce the sticky breakfast fare. For purposes of comparison he scooped from another sack a handful of elegant Basmati grains: he smiled, too much of a diplomat to pass comment in words.

Before bed I wandered up the road to the village of Pencoed, past cramped terraced houses and new bungalows. By the Salem Chapel (1775) where an all-girl youth group was meeting, I spotted a lone Japanese engineer on his way back to the Maerdy and tried to engage him in conversation. He bowed and

switched a smile and responded monosyllabically. It was not clear whether he did not understand or whether he simply considered my questions impertinent.

What I wondered, as we parted and I continued my perambulation, was how he made of the place, with its oversupply of chin shops and discount carpet stores, the strange notice in someone's front window which read: "Gone to garden party at Buckingham Palace! Beware Mother-in-law, and the pub which, though it was a weekday evening, was full of locals who looked as if they had stepped off a charabanc, with children running round and one even in a pushchair though it was after 10pm? The air was filled with raucous chatter so heavily accented that it was barely possible for an Englishman to understand, let alone a Japanese. Had he displayed the lack of taste to venture in.

Back at the hotel the TV was showing a depressing regional news bulletin. A local toxic gas leak. Rioting on a Cardiff housing estate. A Crimestoppers appeal for information on a man who loads supermarket trolleys with wine and runs out into the street without paying. I switched to Channel 5 and watched a giddy sushi-bar comedy about the gastronomic adventures of the Japanese equivalent of Compo, Foggy and Clegg (complete with frilly pinny). Oriental family values meet the occidental soap opera? It felt simultaneously familiar yet totally incomprehensible. But then perhaps it would be an apt preparation for the next day.

Day Five of Valley's Journey will appear next Tuesday.

obituaries / gazette

Air Chief Marshal Sir Denis Smallwood

Air Chief Marshal Sir Denis Smallwood was one of those rare men who were equally successful in conducting and planning military operations. His personal and always cheerful disposition made him, too, universally popular at all levels within and outside the service. The Royal Air Force has been remarkably fortunate in producing a number of such men. "Splinters" Smallwood was commissioned in 1938 and his first appointment was to No 605 Auxiliary Air Force Squadron to whose atmosphere he was temporarily well suited. In 1940 he was transferred to No 87 Hurricane Squadron, of which he later took command. Owing to the somewhat artificial time-scale imposed on the official duration of the Battle of Britain he did not qualify as taking part in it, but thereafter saw a great deal of intensive action and made a fine and justified repu-

tation for himself. His DFC was awarded after the abortive raid on Dieppe on 19 August 1942 when he led three sorties in one day against heavily defended German cliff-top defences.

After a period commanding 286 Hurricane Squadron Smallwood took up a Spitfire Wing in 12 Group in the South West, eventually operating in support of the D-Day landings. For his outstanding skill and inspirational leadership in support of these operations he was awarded the DSO.

After further active service, when peace came he became an Air Ministry planner and began to establish a reputation for thorough and far-sighted competence. However, albeit reluctantly, in 1956 he was involved in the planning and preparation for the disastrous Suez campaign about which he found it impossible to be confident. His scathing personal

opinion of that campaign, that it was a "monumental political cock-up", was not exaggerated. But the RAF performed its role with meticulous accuracy in an action which certainly justified all the criticism aimed at its purpose and concept.

His next command appointment was to the Bloodhound Surface-to-Air Missile Wing at North Coates in Lincolnshire in whose planning and development he had previously paid a major part. Thereafter he commanded the prestigious College of Air Warfare before returning to the Air Ministry as Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operations).

His next and very significant appointment was to command No 3 Group — significant because it marked his transfer to and first experience of Bomber operations. He took to this new role with his usual enthusiasm and incisiveness. It should not be forgotten that our na-

tional strategy at this stage, in the mid-Sixties, depended very much on the concept of the deterrent, practically implemented by the V Bomber force and its quick reaction alert capability. Whatever the validity of this concept, he and his colleagues implemented it with the maximum efficiency and his personal performance was rewarded by further advancement to Senior Air Staff Officer at Bomber Command in 1967; Deputy Commander in Chief at Strike Command; and later Air Officer Commanding in Chief of the Royal Air Force and Commander of all British Forces in that area.

This was perhaps the happiest period of Smallwood's life and he enjoyed it to the full both on and off duty, among other things leading his RAF polo team to a satisfying victory over the local army team.

Inevitably, like all men of

such talents, he was doomed to return to Whitehall, to serve a long stint as Vice Chief of the Air Staff from 1970 to 1974. His capacity for friendship served well in smoothing any inter-service rivalries and he made close friends of his Army, Navy and Civil Service colleagues and also his political masters — this

in spite of the fervour and skill with which he fought the RAF's corner both before and after his eventual retirement in 1976.

He was a regular contributor

to the correspondence columns of this and other newspapers and unusually, perhaps, could always count on his hard but never below the belt. Although by now recognised as a man of great influence and stature, he never became conceited. Important yes, but pompous never.

His final service posting was from 1974 to 1976 as Commander in Chief of Strike Command, the RAF's last surviving operational command. Thereafter he was enthusiastically head-hunted and finished his last six years of full employment as military adviser to British Aerospace (1977-83). He had a large number of outside interests, including riding (he was chairman of the RAF Equi-

Denis Graham Smallwood, air force officer: born 13 August 1918; DFC 1942; DSO 1944; MBE 1951; CBE 1961; GBE 1975; commander, RAF Guided Missiles Station, Lincolnshire 1959-61; AOC and Commandant, RAF College of Air Warfare, Marby 1961-62; ACAS (Ops) 1962-65; AOC, No 3 Group, RAF Bomber Command 1965-67; CB 1966; KCB 1969; SASO, Bomber Command 1967-68; Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Strike Command 1968-69; AOC-in-C, NEAF, Commander, British Forces Near East and Administrator, Sovereign Base Area, Cyprus 1969-70; Vice-Chief of the Air Staff 1970-74; Commander in Chief, RAF Strike Command 1974-76; Military Adviser to British Aerospace 1977-83; married 1940 Jeanne Needham (died 1992; one son, one daughter); died Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire 26 July 1997.

Christopher Foxley-Norris

Margot Walmsley

May I correct Patrick Cosgrave's obituary of Margot Walmsley [2 August]? writes Lord Kennet. Melvin Lasky was not the founding senior editor of *Encounter*; that was Irving Kristol, who is, I think, still going strong in New York.

The obituary also repeats the story of the surprise felt by many when they found out in the mid-Sixties that *Encounter* was funded by the CIA. I have never understood this. *Encounter* was set up and funded by an organisation called the Congress for Cultural Freedom, as Cosgrave rightly says. The CCF set out to counteract Marxism among the French intellectuals (Arthur Koestler has written a good account of its early life). But CCF soon went wider than that, and set up similar monthlies in Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and Australia. *Encounter* was always the most successful.

That was a chain operation backed by American money was obvious to all, and it should have been obvious to all that the sort of money for that sort of operation, even in the United States, does not come from individuals. (Though there was an engaging rich man in the US called Junkie Fleischmann who acted as a sort of cut-out.)

I was well aware of the "CIA" funding, and so were many others who wrote in *Encounter* in its early days. We understood and approved the objectivity and liberalism which the founders knew was necessary to dent continental Marxism. So we took advantage of that: forward-looking and internationalist highbrow mags did not grow on trees then (or now).

We were always watching to see how far left we could go without being cut off. Under Kristol there was, I found, no limit: I attacked the fall-out from US nuclear weapon tests, defended democratic socialism and the welfare state, and so on and so on. I thought so long as I can write what I like, and it publishes nothing vile by anyone else, who cares? But under Lasky, a more blinkered anti-Communism took hold, and he did try to rein us in, so after a bit of a struggle I stopped writing for it.

Jepson intervened: "Here, Keith, use my stuff and stick it on any way you like." The finale was predictable: Miller used Jepson's pads, gloves and bat and went on to score his only century for an English county.

Derek Hodgson

Arthur Jepson, cricketer, cricket umpire and footballer; born Selston, Nottinghamshire 12 July 1915; married (one son, one daughter); died 17 July 1997.

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None of this ever touched Margot Walmsley who, and whose parties, were indeed darling.



James Krüss, writer; born Heligoland, Germany 31 May 1926; died Tarifa Alta, Gran Canaria 2 August 1997.

Known as "birzeln". In *The Great-Grandfather, the Heroes and I* (1967), the old patriarch of the title declares: "I insist upon demonstrating unreason, but at the end I let reason triumph, because I want to be one step ahead of stupid reality."

Sentences like this, never quite as obvious in their meaning as they first appear, were an important part of the legacy left by James Krüss to his young readers. By alerting children to the mystery as well as to the fasci-

cation of words, he taught them to think about language for itself.

By providing them with entertainingly and distinctively crafted stories he was also able to turn this particular exercise into something deeply enjoyable in its own right.

Nicholas Tucker

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Sentences like this, never quite as

business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2696 fax 0171-293 2098
DEPUTY BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: MICHAEL HARRISON

Markets welcome rise in base rates to 7%

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The financial markets were surprised, but pleased by the Bank of England's decision to raise interest rates by a quarter point to 7 per cent yesterday. Industry, though, condemned the move, and a new round of mortgage rate increases is likely to hit home-buyers.

It was not so much the increase, which was widely expected, as the strong hint in the statement from the Monetary Policy Committee that rates have gone far enough for now that pleased the City.

It took the pound four pence lower against the German mark to below DM2.97. Sterling's index against a range of currencies fell by 1.1 points to 102.8.

Share prices soared for the second day running, with the FTSE 100 index closing nearly 61 points higher at 3,086.8. The index has gained 642 points, or 14 per cent, since 1 May.

The Bank's statement yesterday said the appreciation of the pound during the past year had put "severe pressure on

businesses exposed to international competition". It added: "Upward pressure on the exchange rate should be reduced by the perception that interest rates have reached a level consistent with the inflation target."

"They didn't mince their words. Rates will not rise again for the time being," said Adam Cole at James Capel.

Some analysts said further increases in the cost of borrowing would occur, but not until the Bank had clear new evidence the economy was expanding at an unsustainable pace. "You can not conclude interest rates have reached their peak, but there

will be a pause," said Kevin Darlington at ABN-Amro.

Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe said yesterday's move was unnecessary, but he added: "It will do little damage to the economy. What is important is that rates are now on hold."

However, in contrast to the acclaim from the City, the reaction from industry and unions was far more negative.

Kate Barker, chief economist at the CBI, said the employers' organisation was concerned that the latest rise would exacerbate the problems faced by exporters. But she said: "I am pleased the Bank has signalled

there will be no further move."

The British Chambers of Commerce also welcomed this signal, but described yesterday's decision as a "body blow" to business.

Ian Peters, deputy director-general, said: "The Bank should assess the combined effects of lower import prices, falling wage inflation, the Chancellor's Budget measures and previous rises in interest rates, before making any further increases."

Meanwhile, the Engineering Employers' Federation warned of the risk of job cuts as a result of the strong pound. A spokesman said: "We feel

there is an increased likelihood of job losses being announced throughout the autumn period."

The Construction Confederation warned the latest increase ran the risk of damaging the construction recovery. "The whole industry will be affected if the economic recovery is weakened too much," said Ian Deslandes, its chief executive.

Interest rates have now risen by 1 per cent to 7 per cent since the general election. Three of these moves have been made by the Bank of England under the new arrangements which give it control over interest rate decisions.

The Bank said yesterday that the latest increase was "necessary to put the economy on track for achieving the inflation target of 2.5 per cent looking two years ahead". Although it recognised the "severe pressure" the strong pound was placing on exporters, it said the prospects for growth in domestic demand made the quarter-point increase necessary.

A new survey of business on

the high street by the CBI revealed a slight slowdown in the growth of retail sales last month.

Although the monthly survey has not matched official figures for retail sales very closely in recent months, a small fall in the balance of retailers reporting higher sales volumes reassured economists that consumer demand has probably not accelerated again. The CBI said

underlying sales growth was strong and stable.

Cheltenham & Gloucester was the first mortgage lender to increase its loan rate, with an announcement following swiftly on the Bank of England's statement yesterday. Others said they would consider their position, but many are expected to follow suit. However, C&G simultaneously announced an increase in rates for savers. The carpetbagging habit has made deposits extremely footloose, and competition in the savings market is stiff.

Britannia Building Society yesterday announced an increase in its rates for savers from Monday but kept mortgage rates unchanged.

Halifax said it did not intend to make any immediate announcement but would review the situation. Lenders also took a day or two to react to the interest rate increase in July.

Comment, page 21

Strong sterling assaults Reed Elsevier and Zeneca

Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publishing combine, and Zeneca, the giant drugs company, yesterday became the latest companies to reveal the scars left by the soaring pound, ironically on the day that the currency slipped back through the DM3 barrier, writes Magnus Grimond.

Reed said virtually all its first half profits had been wiped out by the effects of currency and forecast a hit in the rest of the year close to the £36m sustained so far. Zeneca, part of a sector whose shares have soared this year on hopes that it will provide a safe haven from economic storms, saw its first half prof-

its growth more than halved as the rampant pound reduced the value of earnings arising from overseas.

Shares in both groups suffered early on, with Reed closing down 40p at 590p, wiping £455m from its market value, and Zeneca losing 49p at one stage, before recovering to end

up 6p at £20.52. Both underperformed a market buoyed by a further fall in the pound, which sank decisively through DM3 to end around 3.3 pence lower at DM2.967. That

boosted exporters and foreign earners in the manufacturing sector, notably LucasVarity, up 11.5p at 208.5p, BTR, which

rose 10.5p to 197p, Rolls-Royce, which put on 13p at 256p, and ICI, where the shares added 42.5p to £11.05.

Separately, Zeneca revealed that its 10 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £669m in the six months to June would have been 22 per cent had it not been for the effects of the pound.

John Mayo, the finance director who is shortly leaving to join GEC, said sales were some £300m lower and operating profits £90m less due to the effects of the pound. He gave warning that its continuing strength in the second half could hit margins.

Investment column, page 23

MMC chief quits as shake-up begins

Michael Harrison

A wide-ranging shake-up of competition policy was under way yesterday after the Government announced details of its new Competition Commission and Sir Graeme Odgers resigned from his £120,000-a-year post as chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Sir Graeme's surprise decision will force the Government to find a new chairman for the Competition Commission since Sir Graeme would have transferred into the job when the authority comes into operation next year and takes over the functions of the MMC.

However Sir Graeme, 63, told the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, that he had decided to return to the private sector rather than serving out the remainder of his term, which was not due to expire until April 1999.

His intention to quit the MMC after just over four years in the job was known to Mrs

Beckett's predecessor, Ian Lang, but the announcement was delayed first by the General Election and then by Labour's review of competition policy.

The Competition Bill published yesterday by Mrs Beckett will beef up the Office of Fair Trading, giving it the power to crack down on cartels and anti-competitive agreements by fining companies up to 10 per cent of their turnover.

But Sir Graeme said that in the months that followed he became convinced that if he was to get a job back in the private sector, he would have to leave the MMC before he reached 65.

During his tenure the MMC has handled 68 referrals of which 54 have been published. Its advice has been ignored by the government four times - GEC's takeover of VSEL, which the MMC recommended be blocked, the two generators' bids for regional electricity companies and the Bass-Carlsberg Tetley merger, which the MMC cleared, and the break-up of British Gas's trading and pipeline arms, which was rejected.

Comment, page 21

Mrs Beckett said she had accepted Sir Graeme's resignation with considerable regret.

Sir Graeme stressed that he supported the changes being introduced by Mrs Beckett and had only decided to leave so that he could end his career back in the private sector. He is looking for a non-executive chairmanship but stressed: "I have

not put out any feelers yet, nor has anybody approached me."

Sir Graeme arrived at the MMC in April 1993 after a career spent in the construction and telecoms industry, culminating in the chief executive's job at Alfred McAlpine. It was only last October that he agreed to a two-year extension of his term from April this year.

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Comment, page 21

Shares soar as Barclays raises buy-backs

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Barclays' shares soared yesterday after the bank reported higher first-half profits and told investors it had £200m more to spend on share buy-backs this year than it had previously thought. The group will buy in £700m of shares this year rather than the £500m it promised shareholders six months ago.

The shares reached a high of £14.65, a gain of 137.5p, before closing at £14.47, 11.5p up on the day. In line with other financial stocks they have soared recently as the stock market has reappraised the prospects for banking profits in the current low-inflation environment.

Reported profits for the six months to June were flat at £1.27bn, but before a one-off hit to the bank's leasing activities from a change in the rate of corporation tax there was an underlying 8 per cent increase. The figures were in line with expectations, as was a 17 per cent increase in the dividend to 13.5p.

Analysts were taken aback by the surge in the share price, which added almost 10 per cent to the value of the bank. It followed big jumps in the past week from HSBC and Lloyds TSB after they reported better than expected first-half results.

Martin Taylor, chief executive, said the decision to increase the scale of this year's buy-backs reflected a stronger capital position than six months ago when he had made a prudent assessment of the bank's excess funds. Barclays has already bought

back £290m of shares, leaving £410m still to come, and has returned £1.75m to shareholders over the past two years.

One of the features of the figures was a sharp improvement at BZW, the investment banking division where profits collapsed in the second half of last year. Although below the £143m achieved in the first six months of 1996, the £124m interim profit compared favourably with the £42m in yesterday's second half.

Profits would have been almost as good as last year's first half were it not for a £20m loss on equity derivatives trading in the run up to the Budget. Changes to the rules on dividend tax credits hit contracts which had been written on the basis of the previous rules.

Mr Taylor was upbeat about prospects for BZW, following an improvement in its return on capital from 8 to 12 per cent. Earlier this week, rival NatWest Markets reported a 2.4 per cent return on its equity.

He insisted there was more to go for at the equities, markets and investment banking operation, and set a target return of 20 per cent for the business. The division has been radically overhauled since chief executive Bill Harrison arrived from Robert Fleming last year, with all three of its main operations now under new leadership.

Elsewhere, personal and business banking both grew strongly. Personal banking benefited from consumer sector growth, especially in credit card and consumer finance areas.

Investment Column, page 23

Director at Burton suits Tesco

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Tesco moved to strengthen its board yesterday when it appointed Andrew Higginson as finance director.

Mr Higginson, 40, finance director of Burton which recently announced de-merger plans, will not join Tesco until 15 November.

Tesco said the appointment would enable David Reid, deputy chairman, to give more focus to corporate strategy as well as the group's operations in Europe and Ireland. Mr Reid's responsibilities include finance and distribution.

Analysts welcomed the appointment, saying Mr Higginson had performed well at Burton and had a high-profile role as chairman of the economic affairs committee at the British Retail Consortium.

Andrew Higginson: Played a big role in Burton recovery

He will be replaced at Burton by Nigel Hall, who was appointed to the board yesterday though he will not take up the finance director role until November. Mr Hall, 42, has been Burton since 1984 and has most recently been finance

director of the multiples business which includes Burton Menswear, Top Shop, Top Man and Principles.

The company denied Mr Higginson's departure would disrupt the plans to de-merge Debenhams from the group.

John Hoerner, chief executive, said that while it was a disappointment to be losing Mr Higginson, he was not leaving until November, by which most of the work on the de-merger would be complete.

Mr Hall was recently made director of the de-merger process with responsibility for overall management of the commercial and statutory work. Mr Hoerner said: "Nigel Hall was actually someone I was going to lose in the de-merger because I didn't have a good enough job for him."

Former Tesco chairman Lord MacLaurin said in April that the company was looking to add further directors to its board. Mr Higginson will join one of the country's most successful and aggressive retailers. Tesco has knocked Sainsbury's off its perch to become the UK's largest grocer. The group has expanded into banking as well as operations in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Ireland.

Mr Higginson has played an important part in Burton's recovery over the last few years during which it has re-built margins and transformed Debenhams into a powerful department store business.

However, the shares have had a tougher time recently and the company announced plans to de-merge Debenhams into a separate quoted company last month.

Tesco shares closed 3p higher at 430.5p while Burton shed 1.5p to 128.25p.

Eurotunnel Shuttle demand nears peak

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Demand for Eurotunnel's car Shuttle service was almost back to its 1996 peak last month, as soaring numbers of British holiday-makers took advantage of the strong pound and the operations recovered from last year's disastrous fire.

Eurotunnel said 227,810 vehicles used the Le Shuttle tourist service, just below the 234,393 a year ago. It means that so far this year more than a million vehicles have used the car Shuttle, with many also attracted by the continuing price war with the ferries.

Though car operations resumed last December, a month after the fire closed one of the two train tunnels, they did not return to full strength until the

spring. The damaged tunnel finally re-opened on 15 May, though Eurotunnel's figures yesterday showed its share of the total cross-Channel car market, at 37 per cent, was still well below last year's 50 per cent peak.

"The whole market has expanded this year with the pound looking so strong at the moment," a Eurotunnel spokesman said.

The tunnel also carried 36,491 lorries in July, the first full month since freight services resumed in June, though lower than the 54,000 trucks last year.

The biggest increase was in Eurostar rail passengers, up 24 per cent between June and July to 651,849, against 529,330 in July 1996. In the first seven months of the year nearly 3.5 million passengers have used Eurostar services.

With effect from the close of business on Thursday 7th August 1997 and until further notice, TSB Base Rate is increased from 6.75% p.a. to 7.00% p.a.

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business

PIA row mars Royal & Sun results

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Interim results from Royal & Sun Alliance yesterday marked the end of the first year of its merged operations but were overshadowed by a continuing row with the Personal Investment Authority over the insurance group's success in tackling mis-selling cases.

The group, formed a year ago in a £6bn deal, insisted it had met a deadline set for it despite a statement from the PIA that it had failed to do so. Roger Taylor, deputy chairman, said Royal & Sun had resolved 90 per cent of so-called priority one cases, which involve people who have already retired or who have since died.

He also said that Royal & Sun had increased its provision against the mis-selling of the late 1980s and early 1990s, although he refused to give figures. The company has nearly 15,000 cases to resolve.

The PIA said it would be talking again to Royal & Sun but refused to comment further. The problem appears to focus on what should constitute a completed case and which cases should be included in determining whether the group has met its target.

The dispute clouded otherwise strong figures showing an 11 per cent rise in trading profits to £501m for the six months to June. The result was badly affected by the strength of sterling, without which profits would have shown an 18 per cent increase. The dividend was lifted 10 per cent to 21.7p per share.

Royal & Sun said it was on target to achieve promised savings worth £175m a year. The group has already shed 3,000 of 5,000 targeted jobs and savings

are running at an annualised rate of £95m. The savings, and a rise in the net asset value from 399p to 433p, cheered the market, which marked the shares 23p higher to close at 545.5p.

In general insurance, profits rose £22m to £374m, helped by better performances in the US and Canada. The underwriting result improved by £51m to a loss of £91m.

According to Mr Taylor, premiums remain under pressure in the UK, where the underwriting loss widened from £19m to £37m. Even after better investment returns there was a fall in total profits from £172m to £165m. Premium volumes fell in most classes of business as Royal rejected unprofitable business.

In line with the rest of the industry, personal motor business suffered from an increase in the average cost of claims. Household insurance was hit by a £19m increase in the cost of subsidence losses thanks to the dry weather at the start of the year.

Now one of the UK's top 10 life assurance suppliers, Royal & Sun Alliance restated its desire to be an important player in the sector but said it was cautious about acquisitions given the prices being commanded by companies.

Richard Gamble, chief executive, described European life companies as "extravagantly expensive" and said it was difficult to justify an acquisition as benefiting shareholders.

During the six months, worldwide life profits, which account for a fifth of the group total, rose 16 per cent to £108m.

Royal sun re-confirmed its commitment to buying back up to 5 per cent of its shares. So far it has bought in just 32 million shares, at a cost of £152m, about half the amount planned.



Prospects look up: Roger Taylor, deputy chairman of Royal & Sun Alliance (left), with Richard Gamble, chief executive. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

'No end in sight' for Mersey Docks dispute

Andrew Yates

Mersey Docks, the UK's second largest ports group, warned yesterday that there was no end in sight to its dispute with 329 Liverpool dockers, which started almost two years ago and has become one of the longest running industrial actions in the world.

Talks between the group and its former employees are likely to remain deadlocked. Mersey Docks has offered to pay the dockers more than £9m, equivalent to £28,000 a man, on the condition they have a secret ballot to vote on the offer. But the dockers have refused to accept the pay-off and Mersey threatened yesterday to take the deal off the table.

Alastair Findlay, Mersey's finance director, said: "At the moment we don't see an end to the dispute and there is no sign yet that the dockers will agree to a secret ballot. We will not increase our offer. At some stage we will have to withdraw our offer if it is not accepted." Mr Findlay claims the dispute, which cost the group £300,000 last year, has had "little effect" on its profits in the last six months.

The dockers were sacked in September 1995 after refusing to cross a picket line in sympathy for striking stevedores. Since then Mersey has taken on new workers and is unlikely to ever employ any of the 329 dissidents again at its container terminal. City accountants KPMG have drawn up plans which could lead to 40 workers getting new jobs at the port. However, the dockers are demanding that all their jobs are restored.

The news comes as Mersey announced a near 60 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £22m in the six months to June, thanks to the closure of its loss-making passenger ferry service, Eurolink, and record cargo volumes at its Liverpool and Medway ports. Strong expansion of shipments across the Irish Sea due to the collapse of a competitor and a growth in the number of cars imported at its terminal in Sheerness have fuelled the increase volumes.

Slump in Rank's profits adds to pressures on Teare

Andrew Yates

City analysts said yesterday that Andrew Teare, the chief executive of Rank, was living on borrowed time after the troubled leisure group announced disappointing results.

Rank was the biggest blue-chip faller on a day that the FTSE 100 index raced away, slumping 30.5p to 340p. Since

Mr Teare took over as chief executive last year, Rank's shares have underperformed the FTSE 100 index by almost 50 per cent.

The poor figures overshadowed Rank's decision to spend more than £310m buying back up to 10 per cent of its own shares over the next few weeks.

Mr Teare said yesterday: "We have embarked on a very big

fundamental overhaul of Rank. Of course, I am disappointed we have not got more to show for it today. But it always takes longer than the market wants.

There is a lot happening in the engine room and I am confident it will come through."

Rank plans to form a worldwide chain of Hard Rock Café hotels, with Singaporean hotel entrepreneur Ong Beng Seng, is due to announce a big shape

based on the popular restaurant chain. Rank has already launched a Hard Rock TV channel and record label.

Mr Teare is also looking to open a new themed restaurant chain to go alongside the Hard Rock Café. Other plans include a chain of US casinos and the group has recently applied

for a US gaming licence. Rank is due to announce a big shape

up of its Butlin's holiday camps next month. Analysts expect at least two of the five Butlin's sites will be completely rebuilt and renamed in an attempt to revitalise the flagging brand.

But observers remained sceptical about Mr Teare's reforms.

"Whenever Rank produces an announcement these days, the share price falls. Mr Teare will have to start coming up with the

goods or he is likely to go," one analyst said yesterday.

Rank plans a rapid expansion of Tom Cobleigh's themed pub chain. But a delay in opening saw Tom Cobleigh's first-half profits fall well short of expectations, adding fuel to critics' claims that Rank paid over the odds for the business.

Rank's pre-tax profits fell to £85m (£144m) for the six

months to June due to a fall in video sales following a lack of big film releases.

The group is raising more than £100m by selling its property portfolio to British Land, the UK's second largest property group. The money will be used to partly fund the share buy-back. The group would consider further share buy-backs next year.

Telewe digital

informative:

Robert Walters looks to Asia for expansion

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Robert Walters, the recruitment consultancy which came to the market last year, said yesterday it was looking for acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific region to boost its international business.

The company opened a Hong Kong office this year and hopes to open one in Singapore by Christmas. Robert Walters, chief executive, said: "We are looking overseas but have nothing planned at the moment."

He was speaking as the company reported doubled pre-tax profits of £3.3m in the six months to 30 June. The shares, which were priced at 105p when the group came to the market last July, soared 39p to a new high of 259p.

Robert Walters, which specialises in permanent and contract jobs in the finance and information technology markets, said it was seeing buoyant growth in contract recruitment and IT jobs. It hopes to benefit from the surge in demand for computer-related expertise to into separate divisions.

Thomson takes a trip into the black

Magnus Grimond

Thomson Travel, the UK's leading travel operators and owners of the Lunn Poly travel agency chain, soared into the black in the first half of this year as British holidaymakers flocked overseas.

The business, part of the Canadian-controlled Thomson Corporation, also painted a rosy view of the outlook, saying demand for the high season months of July to September was strong.

Meanwhile, winter holiday sales were "substantially" above the level of this time last year and bookings for next summer were said to be encouraging. After brochures were issued three months early in May.

Thomson said the buoyancy

Double-digit earnings growth into the next century

Annualized total return of 21.8% over the past 20 years

Dr. A.J.E. O'Reilly
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

"Fiscal 1997 was a watershed for H.J. Heinz Company - a point of departure for a new millennium. With exceptional speed and careful deliberation we undertook an ambitious global reorganisation to sharpen our focus, streamline our production and generate significant savings to improve margins and support our brands.

"Project Millennia is expected to generate approximately \$120 million in pretax savings in Fiscal 1998, increasing to about \$200 million upon full implementation. We also expect improved profit margins, higher return on invested capital and greater asset productivity... During the next five years, we anticipate generating free cash flow of over \$2 billion to apply toward debt reduction, acquisitions and share repurchase.

"I want to pay tribute to Heinz employees worldwide who have made Project Millennia a success. The leadership of Bill Johnson as president and COO has been critical to its implementation.

"The directors' commitment to Heinz shareholders is reflected by the annualized total return of 21.8% over the past 20 years, compared to 15.6% for Standard & Poor's 500.

"When I became CEO in 1979, Heinz's market capitalization was \$900 million, today it is \$17 billion... How was it done? By emphasis on big brands, by expansion into new global markets, by product innovation, by low-cost operations, by excellent management and by focusing on shareholders, consumers and customers. We will continue with this winning formula to generate double-digit earnings growth into the next century.

"I am proud to lead one of the world's premier food companies - a global enterprise dedicated to generating exceptional shareholder value."

The above is extracted from the statement to shareholders of H.J. Heinz Company by the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. A.J.E. O'Reilly, for the year to 30 April, 1997.

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Barslays (1)	- (-)	1.27m (1.27m)	58.2p (55.3p)	12.5p
Capital & Counties (1)	- (-)	80.1m (54.5m)	18p (10.2p)	- (-)
KTC Auto Technologies (1)	15.5m (12.4m)	3.82m (2.71m)	5.08p (4.25p)	n/a (-)
Lloyds (1)	128m (98m)	61.8m (56.1m)	13.4p (13.15p)	8p (7.25p)
Lindon (1)	20.3m (17.5m)	1.96m (-0.15m)	6p (4.8p)	2.25p (1.00p)
Marine Docks & Harbour (1)	82.2m (72.8m)	22.2m (13.8m)	17.55p (10.7p)	4.5p (4p)
Ranger Oil (1)	\$168m (\$120m)	\$23.2m (\$13.1m)	11c (2c)	8c (8c)
Rank Group (1)	85.6m (84.0m)	85m (14.4m)	6.7p (1.2p)	5.25p (5p)
Read Elsevier (1)	1.858m (1.75m)	41.8m (41.6m)	14.5p (14.55p)	4.4p (4.125p)
Robert Walters (1)	35.8m (19.0m)	3.22m (1.67m)	8.8p (4.8p)	1.3p (1.5p)
Royce & Son (1)	- (-)	550m (503m)	23.5p (22p)	7.15p (6.5p)
Zenith (1)	2.75m (2.54m)	689m (610m)	47.4p (43p)	13.5p (12.5p)
(F) Final (1) Interim (1) Second quarter + current cost not income - for Shell Transport & Trading				

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Green Flag



Sir Graeme will be better off in the real world

'He is generally reckoned to have made a decent fist of the MMC and it certainly made a pleasant change to have the place run for once by an industrialist rather than a clever lawyer'

Nobody enters public service expecting to make their fortunes and they certainly don't retire while still in harness if they intend to live out their twilight years in a modicum of comfort.

Who then can blame Sir Graeme Odgers for slipping off his yoke early at the Monopolies and Mergers Commission before he gets too old to pick up a non-executive chairmanship back in the real world of competition? After all he has been at it for more than four years and there is only so much one man can take of Stagecoach, which has been around the circuit with Sir Graeme more times than a number nine bus.

Although it was only announced yesterday, Sir Graeme's resignation letter had been in the in-tray for several months. He told Ian Lang of his intention in April but Mr Lang was too busy losing an election to get around to fixing up a replacement. Sir Graeme is generally reckoned to have made a decent fist of the MMC and it certainly made a pleasant change to have the place run for once by an industrialist rather than a clever lawyer. He only blotted his copy book on four occasions - twice with National Champions Hezza, once with Lang and once with Margaret Beckett, who was not persuaded that Bas should swallow Carlsberg Tetley under any circumstances. At odd times the MMC's sectoral analysis displayed a shaky grasp on reality. But at least Sir Graeme was not responsible for the beer report, the low-water

mark. Had he hung around he would have been elevated to the chairmanship of the super Competition Commission. Now Mrs Beckett will have to look for another New Labour businessman. With a salary of £120,000, candidates may not exactly be falling over themselves to apply. But whoever is selected is in for a busy time judging by Mrs 'refer 'em all' Beckett's track record so far.

MPC strategy may be too clever by half

At first glance the Bank of England's decision to lift interest rates by a quarter point but simultaneously suggest that there are no more increases in the pipeline looks a smart move. The pound duly fell by four pence, short sterling pointed to rates peaking at 7.25 per cent and, for once, the relentless charge in the FTSE 100 was led, not by the financials, but exporters, oil stocks and engineers.

At second glance the Monetary Policy Committee's strategy still looks pretty shrewd but there are also some potential pitfalls ahead. By implying that the latest rate rises rates to a level consistent with the inflation target, the MPC has now taken the wind out of sterling's sales, providing some respite to the battered export sector of the economy. But what is cause for the manufacturing goose is also cause for the consumer gander. The currency markets are no longer factor-

ing in a succession of rate rises but nor is anyone else, which will lessen the dampening effect of yesterday's increase on consumer spending. True it will make credit card borrowing more expensive and push up some mortgages but if the previous three quarter point increases failed to do the trick, why should a fourth one?

Moreover, as the MPC itself concedes, the present strength of sterling largely reflects factors outside of its control, mainly the prospects for the German mark inside a single currency. There can be no guarantee that yesterday's drop in sterling will not be followed by a similarly sharp bounce.

Still, industry can console itself with the knowledge that things could have been worse. The MPC did not listen to the argument that one big rate rise was necessary to penetrate the psychology of the consumer and kill incipient inflation once and for all.

The balance of probability remains that the MPC's policy will deliver lower interest rates at the peak than otherwise might be needed and a softer landing in 1998 or 1999. But it remains a very fine judgment.

An Apple a day keeps the Internet in play

Has Bill Gates achieved world domination with one bite of the forbidden fruit? If so it has come cheap, with a mod-

est price tag of \$150m, the size of the stake it has taken in Apple.

The initial reaction of the stock market to the announcement of Microsoft's stake in its struggling rival suggested the reverse. Microsoft shares fell when the New York markets reopened, while Apple's shares leapt 14 per cent. Investors accepted the argument, crafted with the Justice Department in mind, that it was in Microsoft's interest to ensure the health of its competitor in order to keep further anti-trust proceedings at bay.

The agreement will certainly help Apple, for Microsoft has promised to continue to develop and ship application programmes for Macs which in the past have been be-devilled by a smaller choice of software that is available for PCs, and a fear that even that limited choice would shrink.

However, the terms of the deal point to Mr Gates's obsession with controlling cyberspace as the real rationale. All Apple Mac computers will be bundled with Internet Explorer, Microsoft's Internet software. That means virtually every new PC that is shipped will channel users onto the Net via Microsoft.

Maybe the kind of independent-minded, Microsoft-hating computer nuts who tend to opt for Apple Macs will continue to go out of their way to install alternative software for access to the Internet, like the superior Netscape. Maybe they won't

bother. But investors who share Mr Gates's view that the future belongs to who controls the Internet should reconsider that initial stock market reaction.

When in a hole, stop digging

The cable industry is so used to peering down black holes and then putting on a brave face that Telewest's investors could be forgiven for interpreting yesterday's restructuring plans as just one more hopeful stab in the dark.

Whether the cutbacks go far enough is debatable, but what Telewest has finally admitted - that the investment bonanza is well and truly over - is just as applicable to all the other companies still merrily digging away as their shares slide.

But savage cost cutting on its own will never be enough, unless Telewest and its peers can encourage more people to buy their services.

Without BSkyB's help the cable companies can do nothing. Their best hope is that Ofcom will emerge as a fairy godmother, nudging BSkyB into renegotiating the complex structure of programming charges. But BSkyB, as always, is not going to fall over itself to help the cable industry as it plans a rival digital satellite service.

Telewest to delay start of digital television service

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The cable industry's plans for an early launch of a digital television service were left in disarray last night after Telewest Communications, the second biggest cable group, said it was postponing the start-date until the spring.

Revealing the outcome of its cost-cutting review, Telewest pledged to halve its annual investment budget from more than £500m to around £250m. Stephen Davidson, chief executive, insisted the cuts reflected what he claimed was Telewest's two-year lead over other cable companies in completing its networks, with 75 per cent due to be constructed by the end of the year.

Pledging to deliver a "quantum

leap forward in performance of the company", Mr Davidson said the construction programme would plunge from 40,000 homes a month to just 5,000. He said Ofcom, the industry watchdog which sets construction targets, had been consulted. "We've had a very constructive and understanding response."

Telewest also confirmed plans to cut 1,400 jobs, a quarter of its 5,500-strong workforce, a move which would save £60m a year. Telewest will make a 25 per cent charge to cover the cuts in its third-quarter results.

Mr Davidson said the digital cable service, which had been planned to start towards the end of this year, will not begin operations until the second quarter of 1998. The delay would save £7m out of a £25m launch budget.

The start will now coincide with the launch of British Sky Broadcasting's digital satellite joint venture with British Telecom, called British Interactive Broadcasting (BIB). Mr Davidson denied Telewest had lost the opportunity to steal a lead from BSkyB. "We always said it was good to keep our options open but there are benefits of going first and there are benefits of going together."

He said technological changes could cut the cost of set-top boxes, which decode programmes for customers, by a third. Another reason claimed was the move by Microsoft, the computer software giant, into the cable market which could set a lower cost-operating standard across the industry.

Telewest would not comment

on whether it was renegotiating a deal with General Instrument of the US for an initial order of around 10,000 boxes. "We may have an opportunity to buy the same set-top boxes at prices significantly lower than three months ago," Mr Davidson said.

Last night Cable & Wireless Communications (CWC), the merged cable group which had been developing a joint service with Telewest, declined to comment on the announcement. CWC has also cut back on cable spending recently, though no announcement has so far been made.

Telewest yesterday revealed losses of £142.3m for the first six months of the year, up from £117.5m during the same period in 1996. Its phone customer base grew by 100,131, com-



Stephen Davidson: Denied lost opportunity over launch

pared with 31,821 television subscribers. The penetration rate, which measures the number of households which take up the service, rose from 26.4 per cent to 28.9 per cent for telephony and by 1 per cent, to 22 per cent, for television.

Shell discounts move to buy back shares

Chris Godsmark

Shell, the Anglo-Dutch oil giant, yesterday dismissed any imminent moves to follow British Petroleum's share buy-back plan as disappointed investors with a bigger-than-expected fall in second-quarter profits.

Shares in the group fell 14.5p to 458.5p against a soaring stock market as Shell revealed a 10 per cent drop in net income between April and June to £1.07bn. It left earnings for the first half of the year down 15 per cent to £2.49bn.

Mark Moody-Stuart, Shell's group managing director, said share buybacks had been considered often but were "just a non-starter" because of a 25 per cent tax charge for investors in the Netherlands.

BP this week announced plans to buy back shares next

year to raise its debt levels. Shell, in contrast, has £7bn of cash in the bank.

Hinting at the possibility of a generous interim dividend increase in September, Mr Moody-Stuart said: "I haven't heard shareholders complaining lately. Shell is a huge cash-generating machine."

Shell blamed the profits drop partly on the increase in the value of sterling, which knocked £11m off second-quarter earnings. Another £30m was wiped from chemicals profits after what the group described as "not terribly good planning" saw almost three quarters of the division's maintenance budget spent in just three months. It left chemicals profits outside the US down by 38 per cent in the second quarter to £86m.

In a clear indication yesterday of Shell's drive to inject a more entrepreneurial culture

informative:

With effect from 11 August 1997. First Direct will offer the following interest rates:			
TESSA			
All credit balances 7.25% p.a. Tax free)			
Fixed Interest Savings Account			
Credit interest is paid at the end of the term (paid annually). Minimum deposit £5000.			
Credit Interest	Gross	Net	% p.a.
Term:	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
6 months	6.25	5.00	
1 year	6.50	5.20	
2 years*	6.75	5.40	
3 years*	7.25	5.80	
High Interest Savings Account (including 6 Day Account)			
Credit Interest	Gross	Gross CAR	Net CAR
Term:	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
£1 to £2,499	4.00	4.00	3.24
£2,500 to £24,999	4.00	4.00	3.65
£25,000 to £49,999	6.15	6.29	5.01
£50,000 and over	6.50	6.68	5.20
Direct Interest Savings Account (including 6 Day Account)			
Credit Interest	Gross	Gross CAR	Net CAR
Term:	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
£1 to £2,499	0.50	0.50	0.40
£2,500 to £24,999	4.00	4.00	3.44
£25,000 to £49,999	5.00	5.00	4.05
£50,000 and over	6.50	6.68	5.30
High Interest Savings Account (including 6 Day Account)			
Credit Interest	Gross	Gross CAR	Net CAR
Term:	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
£1 to £2,499	0.50	0.50	0.40
£2,500 to £24,999	4.00	4.00	3.44
£25,000 to £49,999	5.00	5.00	4.05
£50,000 and over	6.50	6.68	5.30

Capital Corp shareholders seek new bid

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Some institutional shareholders in Capital Corporation are hoping for a fresh bid for the casino group as they remain unhappy about its performance and the progress made by new management.

The comments come two days after Capital was rescued from a £192m bid by London Clubs International after Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of the Trade, blocked the deal on competition grounds.

One shareholder said: "Have this management delivered the results? I don't think so." The shareholders said another bid was possible from groups such as Ladbrokes or Rank.

The comments came as Capital Corporation tried to clear its name yesterday as damaging allegations made about its business continued to circulate. Alan Hearn, chief executive, said the company was prepared to go to court to contest any possible action by a group of disgruntled former employees.

It added that it was reserving judgement on whether it

might take legal action against the group.

Eleven staff left Capital Corporation's head office in April, during the LCI bid. Kenneth Thompson, the former acting chief executive, decided not to seek election in May while Desmond Pereira, former finance director, left acrimoniously during the same month. It is understood Mr Pereira is considering legal action.

Capital Corporation has been the subject of severe criticism about the stringency of its internal controls.

The company said yesterday that suggestions made in a gaming report by consultants Totenberg & Co last year had been largely implemented and that its controls had been endorsed by its auditors and by the Gaming Board in the MMC report on the LCI bid.

It said the allegations pre-dated existing management and that in addition to a new chief executive and finance director the group had appointed Mike Hopkins, former head of the clubs and vice squad of the Metropolitan Police as head of security and compliance.

Samsung suffers as chip prices fall

Samsung Electronics, the world's largest computer chip manufacturer, warned yesterday that its first-half profits would tumble.

The company yesterday released interim sales figures showing a modest 3 per cent rise to 9,000m South Korean won (£6.3bn), but the "net profit fell sharply," said Choi Hyung Joon, director of Samsung's accounting division.

Analysts predict that the first-half profit, due to be reported next Thursday, will total one-quarter of last year's 453.4bn won (£317m), reflecting a steep decline in global prices for computer chips.

The spot price of the benchmark 16 megabyte dynamic

random access memory chips, or DRAMs, used in computers and other electronics products, could be bought for \$5.95, half the price achieved at the beginning of the year.

Samsung and other Korean semiconductor makers have attempted to reverse the fall in global chip prices by cutting DRAM output by 25 per cent in July.

Samsung's profit will improve in the second half, as it

is shifting its production lines for higher value-added chips, "Kim Nam Tac, an electronics analyst at Samsung Securities said. He expects the company's net profit to rise 170 per cent from a year ago to 450bn won for the whole of 1997.

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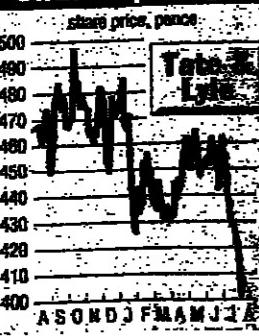
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market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100	+60.6
5086.8	+60.6
FTSE 250	+80.9
4598.2	+80.9
FTSE 350	+31.5
2432.3	+31.5
SEAO Volume	
1279.9m shares,	
60,684 bargains	
Gilt's Index	+0.26
97.10	+0.26

Share spotlight



Takeover rumours sweeten Tate & Lyle share price

Taking Stock

The sweet smell of takeover action wafted through the markets yesterday as rumours resurfaced of a bid for Tate & Lyle by Associated British Foods.

Dealers said there were renewed hopes that ABF would spend its £1.5bn cash pile on Tate, which plunged to a year low of 401p earlier this month. Although ABF controls a substantial proportion of the UK sugar market through its ownership of British Sugar, some analysts do not believe buying Tate would cause competition problems.

Investors in Tate have had a bumpy ride recently as the company has been battered by sterling's strength. The company's woes have been compounded by reorganisation costs in the United States, and ongoing problems in emerging markets such as Bulgaria.

Analysts said the two companies would complement

each other, but some expressed doubt about whether Tate was the kind of investment ABF was after. Tate closed up 8.5p at 414p, and ABF jumped 13p to 539.5p.

These days, when the sky seems to be the limit for Footsie, whispers of takeovers are few and far between. The markets were once again engulfed in a sea of blue as Footsie closed at another record high of 5,086.8, up 60.6 points, having touched 5,095.3 in afternoon trading.

Trading was hectic, with almost 1.3 billion shares changing hands – the busiest day for around a month.

Sterling eased below the DM3 level after the Bank of England indicated that the quarter-point rise in base rates would be the last for a while, providing relief for exporters to the second day running.

Rolls-Royce motored along to 256p, up 13p, and TI Group

ended 19p better at 593.5p. GKN, also a beneficiary of a weaker sterling, added 31.5p to £11.88 after brokers responded positively to the company's better-than-expected profits the day before. Hoare Govett said the stock was undervalued. NatWest advised investors to add, and BZW said buy.

The building sector put on a spurt after the Bank's hint that the base rate rise would be the last in the current economic cycle. In particular, Wimpey jumped 24p to 485p, relieved that the rejuvenation of the construction industry would not be choked off by further increases in interest rates in the near future. The weaker dol-

lar also helped as 40 per cent of the company's earnings are from the States.

But neither exporters nor builders quite managed to out-smart Barclays, which added a hefty 120p to close at £14.48. The bank, which soared on news that it had lifted its share buyback by £200m to £700m, boosted shares in other financial stocks.

Otherwise, the insurance stocks put in a fine performance after Royal & Sun Alliance reported interim results which exceeded City expectations. The group leapt 23p to 545.5p, and gave others in the sector a lift into the bargain. Guardian Royal Exchange out-

performed the other Footsie insurance companies, up 14.5p to 307.5p. Commercial Union, which reported the day before, ended 29p richer at 715p, and General Accident joined the rowdy muddle, finishing 17p up at 955.5p.

Not all the blue chips shared in the euphoria of Footsie's second record-breaking surge in a row. Railtrack was the worst-performing Footsie stock, plumb-ing 30.5p to 340p after the group announced interim results below forecasts. Reel International shed 40p to finish at 590p and Shell dropped 14.5p to 458.5p after both companies' interim also disclosed.

Several groups with media interests were in the doldrums after sceptics worried about a downturn in advertising revenues. Granada Group eased 14.5p to 805p and Carlton Communications ended 9p poorer at

491p. Meanwhile, United News & Media closed down 6p at 681.5p over concerns it might buy into the cable industry. NTL, the US cable group, has approached Telewest Communications about creating a rival to Cable & Wireless Communications. It is thought United is considering joining in.

News that United was to axe 100 jobs in its Miller Freeman trade magazine division did not seem to have a positive impact on the share price, despite the cost-savings to be gleaned from the cuts.

More Group, the poster advertising company, did not take part in the decline though, notching up a 9p rise to 611.5p. Analysts said the rebound, after the group hit a year low of 554p in June, was a reflection of contracts won in France and the imminent completion of a deal in Australia.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex rights = Ex dividend. A ex u United Securities Market. S suspended. Party Paid pm NI Paid Shares. £ All Stock. Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0891 223 335, and when prompted to do so enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 223 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 – Real-time 00 Sterling Rates 04 Water Shares 35
UK Stock Market Report 01 Bullion Report 05 Electricity Shares 40
UK Company News 02 Val St Report 20 High Street Banks 41
Foreign Exchange 03 Tokyo Market 21

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Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume
BT	5200000	Citibank	2300000	Ry & Sun Allco	3300000	SOC	1500000
Shell Transport	5200000	Leisure TSB	1970000	Locality	1400000	Pub Royce	1000000
BTG	2600000	ASDA Group	1760000	Bardsey	1000000	Norwich Union	1000000
General Elect	2300000	BAT Inds	1640000	Woolwich	1000000	BSI	1000000
British Steel	2300000	Woolworth	1600000	Hartill	1000000	Vodafone	1000000

FTSE 100 index hour by hour

Open	5086.8 up 104	11.00 5070 down 92	15.00 5084.3 up 581
50.00	5040 down 46	12.00 5025.7 down 0.5	16.00 5091.8 up 656
50.00	5034 up 13.2	13.00 5062.7 up 365	Close 5086.8 up 803

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This collection includes <

Zeneca keeps pace with rivals

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Yesterday's initial 49p drop in Zeneca's share price was a chastisement reaction by the market to the drug group's interim figures. Announcing a 22 per cent rise in underlying profits for the six months to June, it was hard not to agree with the group's chief executive, Sir David Barnes, that the results bore comparison with the best of his rivals.

Equivalent half-way results announced by Glaxo Wellcome showed the giant of the sector managing a meagre 6 per cent increase in underlying trading profits, and even SmithKline Beecham's more respectable 16 per cent was still well behind.

The problem, of course, is that drug groups have been in the forefront of the stock market's giddy rise this year. Zeneca's share price, which ended 6p ahead at £20.525 yesterday, has only risen by around a quarter since the beginning of January.

Based on NatWest Markets' unchanged profit forecast of £1.09bn for the full year, the shares stand on a forward multiple of 27. That is below its UK peers and well below US drug groups, but still leaves little room for mistakes.

Certainly Zeneca was making all the right noises yesterday. Given that the first-half profits had to bear a £90m hit from the strong pound, the 10 per cent increase in the pre-tax total to £669m was more than respectable. Group margins rose a chunky 2.8 percentage points to 24 per cent.

Zeneca gave warning that the continuing impact of sterling plus higher new product launch costs and the traditional seasonal downturn in agrochemicals, would hit second-half returns. Even so, John Mayo, the group's departing finance director, gave a strong hint that margins would still be ahead in the full-year figures.

Apart from Kadian, a morphine product which is under review, most of Zeneca's recent introductions seem to be selling well. Drugs launched in the past two years, such as cancer drugs Zoledex and Casodex, now represent 16 per cent of sales and the second half will see more, including the further rollout of the Zomig migraine drug and Serquel for schizophrenia.

All being well, this investment in new products launches will pay off in higher sales next year.

But the longer-term question is how Zeneca copes with a string of patent expiries early next century, notably its best-selling Zestril heart drug, which saw sales slip 5 per cent to £305m in the first half. Zeneca is clearly confident that with more than 45 products

in its development pipeline, it can sail through that squall. Analysts will feel more confident after its next research presentation to the City in early December. Even so, investors should hold on.

Barclays keeps a grip on costs

Martin Taylor, Barclays' chief executive, said yesterday's half-year figures from the bank got better the more you looked at them. Certainly the market seemed to find more to cheer about than was immediately apparent from an underlying 8 per cent rise in profits to £1.27bn, raising the share price by 120p to an all-time high of £14.475.

What appealed to the analysts was better cost control than they had expected and lower provisions against bad debts.

BZW, the investment banking operation that was such an embarrassment only six months ago, appears to be on the mend and investors are to get £700m in share buy-backs this year,

rather than the £500m investors had been promised last February.

The methodology Mr Taylor used to calculate how much of Barclays' capital is surplus to requirements is well beyond ordinary mortals.

But it needs no rocket science to understand a total of £1.75bn of value handed back to shareholders in the past two years. It is little wonder the shares have more than doubled since the start of last year.

Banking in the UK led the charge, with profits showing a healthy 30 per cent improvement. Personal banking and the corporate side, the powerhouse of the group, did well, despite a squeeze in margins in all areas except mortgages.

BZW's profits of £124m were three times higher than the disastrous second half of 1996 and the investment bank's return on capital rose from 8 per cent to a more respectable 12 per cent. That is still barely above BZW's cost of capital, but it is at least moving in the right direction.

The question is whether the stock market is putting too much faith in the current return on equity of 24 per cent being sustainable.

After yesterday's sharp increase,

the shares trade on around 12 times Salomon Brothers' expected earnings per share of 128p for next year, assuming profits of £2.7bn.

That puts it in the middle of the pack, above NatWest and the Scottish banks, but below Lloyds TSB, HSBC and Halifax.

The leaders have better growth prospects and Barclays' rating is now about right.

Reed boosts online services

The strength of sterling was the main story at the half-way stage for Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publishing group. Currency effects wiped out almost all the underlying 10 per cent profit increase it achieved in the six months to June, leaving headline profit just 1 per cent higher at £419m. Shareholders in Reed International, the British end of this double headed group, see their interim dividend rise 7 per cent to 4.4p, while Dutch shareholders in Elsevier bag a 45 per cent increase to 0.29 guilders.

The performance of the main business divisions, namely scientific, professional, business and consumer publishing, was equally muted. The real excitement lay elsewhere, notably in the future development of new features, including the online information service, ScienceDirect, due for commercial release later this year, and the increased investment in electronic publications at Reed Travel group. An active acquisition policy should also add spice.

This year the group has committed itself to more than 20 acquisitions, costing in total over £600m, including the Chilton Business group which will be completed shortly. It has at least as much again available in cash or borrowing powers. A deal to acquire Reuters' specialist medical magazines is in the wind, while the sale of the children's book division to Pearson or to management could be announced by the end of the month.

Market conditions in the second half are unlikely to improve much, however. Some 70 per cent of profits come from overseas and sterling still looks uncomfortably strong. Several analysts scaled down forecasts for the full-year yesterday. The consensus is now around £850m, for a 5 per cent rise on 1996. The shares fell 40p to 590, which values them on a forward multiple of 20, falling to 18. High, but still worth holding for the long term.

Super-SIB's search for sq ft has agents drooling

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Whither super-SIB? Or rather, which of the handful of suitable sites in London will house Labour's new investment regulator?

The subject is a hot topic in regulatory circles, not least because the 2,000-odd staff may end up in Canary Wharf in London's Docklands, still not the easiest place to get to and from.

Word is that staff from the nine existing bodies which will go to make up the new leviant are fighting a rear-guard action to avoid banishment downriver. Optimists argue that since super-SIB's chairman, Howard Davies, lives in west London, he is unlikely to want to commute that far east.

Finding a site for super-SIB is also making property agents drool, being by far the biggest property deal in the capital for some time.

Super-SIB will need around 300,000 sq ft of space by next year, which narrows the number of acceptable sites. There are three buildings nearing completion in central London at the 200,000 sq ft mark – for instance, a building by Argyll and Helical Bar on London Wall. Ovissi could be housed in the NatWest Tower near by, which itself is just being refurbished.

Another theory goes thus: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is still embarrassed by the spendthrift image gained under its former boss Jacques Attali, who spent more on the head office marble loos and gold tape than he did on lending to needy countries.

This theory suggests that the EBRD is seeking someone else to take up the lease on its 367,000 sq ft Bishopsgate office so that it can move to cheaper digs in Canary Wharf. And who better to move into Bishopsgate than the PIA pension scheme despite the provisions of the 1995 Pensions Act?

Another contender is a giant site in Spitalfields, earmarked as the new home of Liffe, the futures market that continues to grow at a prodigious rate.

However, if Liffe does a U-Turn and abandons its "open outcry" trading for screen-based trading, it won't need such a big new building. Again, super-SIB could leap in and take the building instead.

The regulators will be up against stiff competition for space in the City. West Deutsche Landesbank is about to make a decision on taking 400,000 sq ft, while Goldman Sachs is also poised to expand. Whatever

happens, the property agents will be quaffing champers for some time to come.

Still on the subject of Super-SIB, I hear that its head of human resources is going to be Sandra Jenner. She will come with a warm endorsement from her present colleagues at the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) where she holds a similar position.

Her most interesting decision at the PIA has been the attempt to exclude members of staff from the board of trustees of the PIA pension scheme despite the provisions of the 1995 Pensions Act.

The people at BZW may be back on track following this year's better results, but the 3,500 staff recently relocated to Canary Wharf have had a

salutary introduction to the measty public transport facilities in Docklands.

Most people in Canary Wharf rely on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). This week it instituted a bizarre one-way pedestrian scheme lasting four months while one of its escalators at Bank Underground station is repaired. So if you want to transfer from the DLR to the Tube you have to walk underground to Embankment station, emerge at street level and then walk all the way back to Bank station.

This has prompted scenes of mass revolt by passengers, who don't see why they can't use other staircases in Bank station. Investment bankers from BZW, Credit Suisse First Boston and Morgan Stanley are all affected. What's the banking equivalent of a Peasant's Revolt?

Recent management upheavals at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden have been described as "more dramatic than anything Verdi came up with". At the centre is May Allen, due to take up the post of chief executive next month after the shock resignation of Genista McIntosh.

The ROH has just closed for a two-year refurbishment that will cost £121m. MPs have criticised the way Ms Allen was recruited from her previous job as secretary-general of the Arts Council.

Anyway, I had not realised she was married to Nigel Panting, one of three senior executives at Hamros Bank who resigned last month over the bank's involvement with Andrew Regan's attempt to buy the Co-op. Mr Panting is now on "garden leave". Some in the opera world suspect his wife may join him if the current wave of criticism does not subside.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling			Dollar			D-Mark		
	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.5882	1.5871	1.5861	1.0000	0.9958	0.9951	0.5332	0.5321	0.5314
Canada	2.2000	2.1975	2.1950	1.3333	1.3321	1.3300	0.8711	0.8701	0.8690
Germany	2.3711	2.3701	2.3678	1.0000	0.9971	0.9953	0.5276	0.5257	0.5238
France	10.0285	10.0220	10.0220	6.3225	6.3173	6.3145	3.3794	3.3756	3.3745
Italy	22.041	21.974	21.974	14.07	14.07	14.07	8.7511	8.7511	8.7511
Japan	15.0065	15.0111	15.0111	10.67	10.67	10.67	6.1571	6.1571	6.1571
ECU	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500
Belgium	1.1376	1.1376	1.1376	0.5101	0.5101	0.5101	0.2657	0.2657	0.2657
Netherlands	1.1317	1.1317	1.1317	0.5100	0.5100	0.5100	0.2657	0.2657	0.2657
Ireland	1.3077	1.3077	1.3077	0.5100	0.5100	0.5100	0.2657	0.2657	0.2657
Norway	12.211	12.201	12.201	0.9080	0.9080	0.9080	0.4729	0.4729	0.4729
Spain	22.074	22.074	22.074	14.07	14.07	14.07	8.1199	8.1199	8.1199
Sweden	2.2675	2.2675	2.2675	1.3333	1.3333	1.3333	0.8168	0.8168	0.8168
Switzerland	2.4552	2.4552	2.4552	1.5000	1.5000	1.5000	0.8168	0.8168	0.8168
Australia*	2.3550	2.3550	2.3550	1.5000	1.5000	1.5000	0.8168	0.8168	0.8168
Hong Kong	12.2725	12.2725	12.2725	0.8168	0.8168	0.8168	0.4729	0.4729	0.4729
New Zealand*	2.4550	2.4550	2.4550	1.5000	1.5000	1.5000	0.8168	0.8168	0.8168
Saudi Arabia	5.9483	5.9483	5.9483	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	2.0201	2.0201	2.0201
Singapore	2.3370	2.3370	2.3370	1.4735	1.4735	1.4735	0.7665	0.7665	0.7665

Forward rates quoted high to low at a discount: subtract from spot rate
Rate quoted low to high at a premium:
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Interest Rates

UK 6.75% Germany 2.50% US 8.50% Japan 0.50%

France 4.50% Spain 5.00% Central 2.50% 3.00%

Intervention 3.00% Italy 4.75% Switzerland 1.50%

Discount 6.25% Discount 2.50% Discount 1.50%

Advanced 2.50% Discount 3.25% Discount 1.50%

Bond Yields

Country Syr yield % 10yr yield % Country Syr yield % 10yr yield %

UK 7.0% 6.92 7.25% Netherlands 8.25% 4.75 5.75 5.81

sport

Revolution put on hold for the day

If there is a revolution on the march in English cricket it was lost on a sun-baked but largely subdued audience at Trent Bridge, for whom the present disparity between the English and Australian teams was eminently too quickly.

From the moment it became known that Mark Taylor had won the toss, that Michael Atherton's new and supposedly "lucky" coin had yielded no more kindly on him than the four-time los-

Jon Culley finds little for the faithful at Trent Bridge to shout about

er he had discarded in its favour, there was a sense of inevitability that almost instantly conveyed itself to the crowd.

The heady atmosphere of Edgbaston in the first week of June seemed a good deal more than nine weeks ago. Atherton's exhortation to the public to bottle up the Birmingham spirit and

carry it with them through the series long forgotten words.

There was a roar of sorts as the recalled Devon Malcolm ran in to bowl the first delivery of the match, but peaceful subduing soon appeared to have greater appeal than getting behind our beleaguered boys. Even the entry into Test cricket of the Holloko brothers, whose presence, we had been told, would "fire the nation's imagination", stirred only negligible excitement.

Ben, whom Atherton had hoped would lend his youthful lack of inhibition to England's cause, began with three overs of little distinction and was promptly rewrapped in cotton wool. This worked inasmuch as he returned later to dismiss Greg Blewett with a long hop, but did little to deflate the swelling confidence of the opposition.

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wished would lend his youthful lack of inhibition to England's cause, began with three overs of little distinction and was promptly rewrapped in cotton wool.

This worked inasmuch as he returned later to dismiss Greg Blewett with a long hop, but did little to deflate the swelling confidence of the opposition.

The Australian camp now gleefully perceive English cricket as a game "in disarray", the prospect of a fifth successive Ashes series loss seen as the largest single factor behind the far-reaching reforms outlined by Lord MacLaurin this week. To their eyes, moreover, the selection of the Hollolokes carries with it the smack of desperation.

It was not quite a repeat of 1989, when Mark Taylor batted all day with Geoff Marsh and Australia finished 301 without loss, but there were too many similarities to the badgering of the opposition.

The last two went harmlessly wide of the off stump and Blewett did not have to play at either of them.

The obvious truth is that you are not going to get a batsman out if he does not have to play at the ball and this sad pattern continued until tea. Another wicket then would have changed the whole situation.

Contrast this with the bowling of Glenn McGrath or Jason Gillespie when they have got England in a corner.

The batsman is given no respite whatever. He seldom gets the chance to play no stroke and hardly ever is given a ball he can hit for four. There is a far greater and more impressive discipline about the Australians in all departments of the game. This is one of the main reasons why England are 2-1 down in the series and Australia are almost certain to retain the Ashes.

Caddick beat Waugh out of the off stump with his first two balls before being driven beautifully through the covers off the third. Then it was Malcolm's turn after a leg bye had taken Waugh down to his end. Waugh only had to play one ball in the next over; one hit him high on the thigh and the other

hit him on the thigh and the other

sport

COUNTDOWN TO THE 1997-98 FOOTBALL SEASON

BEYOND THE PREMIERSHIP: Pierre Van Hooijdonk is aiming to help his new club back into the top flight and the Dutch team into the World Cup final. Phil Shaw spoke to him and, below, sets the scene for the three divisions of the Nationwide League

Van the man to fan Forest's promotion fires

Fifty thousand Celtic supporters once proclaimed Pierre van Hooijdonk's uniqueness in song. Now it is confirmed, Nottingham Forest's towering Dutchman is the only player preparing to start the season against Port Vale at Burslem with realistic hopes of finishing it against Brazil in Paris.

From one of the First Division's less salubrious settings, the World Cup final, some might call it a journey from the ridiculous to the divine, Van Hooijdonk stalked by image problems over the past year chooses his words more carefully.

With a handful of arguable exceptions – Ravanello, Kinnikadze, Merson and Sinclair – the 27-year-old striker is the biggest star in the Football League firmament.

Yet he is anxious not to be seen as arrogant, one of the more polite tags he attracted during the dispute with Celtic that led to his £3.5m defection to Forest in March. He had allegedly said that the £7,000 a week the Glasgow club were offering was "all very well for the homeless but not for an international footballer".

Van Hooijdonk claims he was "set up" by a reporter and never mentioned the homeless. Some mud invariably sticks, however, which may explain why, after stressing that he intends to spend no more than one season outside the Premiership, he says that is a declaration of ambition on Forest's behalf rather than a prima donna's ultimatum.

As with many players for whom English is not the first language, the nuances of his conversation are open to misinterpretation, wilful or otherwise. It does not take a cynic to see, for instance, how his self-effacing assessment of his role as perpetual substitute for the Netherlands could be portrayed as gross vanity.

"I can't believe I'm not in the starting line-up," he says, sufficed. "It's not as if our strikers are the best." Then comes the

and the punching: "We only have Kluivert and Bergkamp."

When I mention that tomorrow's opponents, Port Vale, have several of his compatriots in their squad, he wonders whether they will consider him concealed if he does not recognise and address them in Dutch. But if modesty and sensitivity are not attributes one automatically associates with Van Hooijdonk, he leaves them behind when he goes to work.

On the pitch, he projects a self-confidence which is hard to

early on there were contract problems. At first it didn't worry me because I was playing regularly and doing the business."

The souring of the affair, centring on his insistence that

Celtic had reneged on an agree-

ment to pay him more if he topped 20 goals, led eventually to his being dropped. "I didn't play for several weeks and I asked the manager [Tommy Burns] if there would be changes in the near future. The answer was no."

"There were two World Cup

matches coming up, against San

Marino and Turkey. In my position in the Dutch squad, which

is usually as a substitute to try

and force things late in a game, I couldn't afford to miss them."

"My big target is to get to the

finals and when Forest came in

it was a chance to play in the

Premier League. I explained to

Gus Hiddink [the Dutch

coach] that I wasn't playing. He

didn't say it in so many words, but I needed to be playing."

With Forest struggling to stay up amid uncertainty over whether Stuart Pearce or Dave Bassett was actually manager, the words "frying pan" and "fire" sprung to mind. Van Hooijdonk netted once in nine games and his new team finished bottom.

Contrary to some perceptions, he neither had nor sought an escape clause. He had harboured a desire to play in England since he watched Tottenham win the FA Cup in 1981 on television before changing out into his Spurs shirt ("the Cog Sportif one") to kick a ball around.

"The game here is very open and honest, much better for strikers. In Italy the priority is not to lose. The climate and lifestyle of France or Spain appealed to me but this is the place to play."

Better than Scotland? "Football there is very fast," he says, searching for a diplomatic form of words, "but fast isn't always good." There was too much emphasis on gaining ground – "like rugby" – and it was unhealthy that two clubs might meet six or seven times in a season.

The game here is very open and honest, much better for strikers. In Italy the priority is not to lose. The climate and lifestyle of France or Spain appealed to me but this is the place to play."

His volleying is, to take one example, stronger than his heading. The problem is persuading others to recognise it.

"My first few weeks at Forest were the same as when I joined Celtic. My team-mates were hitting high balls. In fact I like to get involved in the build-up.

I get a similar sensation making a goal as scoring.

"Anyway, there's more to football here than the physical side. Who were the best players last season? Zola, Juventus and Beckham. Not big."

The extent to which Van

Hooijdonk's self-analysis fits in with the requirements of Bassett, who is famous for route-one football, will be revealing.

As for the City Ground faithful, they must trust that he emulates another attacker with attitude, Stan Collymore, rather than Bryan Roy.

Both were to leave in acrimonious circumstances. But whereas Collymore's marksmanship took Forest back up in 1994, Roy flattered to deceive before flouncing off to Berlin deriding Nottingham as a cultural desert populated by narrow-minded people.

The greater number of other "dark and tall men", as he puts it, has made it easier to blend in and enjoy a private life.

When he and his first, less-than-serious girlfriend in Scotland married, the tabloids had wanted chapter and verse.

On the subject of fine detail,

Van Hooijdonk can reel off each of his eight internationals (four goals) and the number of minutes he played: 14 in Wales, 24 in Turkey and so on. Before his most recent cameo, 21 minutes in South Africa, the Dutch

trained in searing heat only for the match to be staged in freezing temperatures.

The contrasts promise to be equally extreme as Van Hooijdonk alternates between Forest duty against the likes of Bury and Stockport and the World Cup. All the more so if his Parisian fantasy becomes a reality.

Photograph: David Ashdown

distinguish from arrogance. Indeed, when he first arrived from NAC Breda two and a half years ago, his bravado was exactly what Celtic needed after so long in the shadow of Rangers.

He scored on his debut and in his first Old Firm game. After heading the goal in the 1995 Scottish Cup final that ended Celtic's six years without a trophy, he hit another 32 in his only full campaign. "There's only one Pierre," the green hordes swooned.

"I had a fantastic relationship with the fans and received lots of kind letters after I left," Van Hooijdonk recalls. "But very

soon I realised I was not the

starting line-up," he says, sufficed. "It's not as if our strikers are the best."

Then comes the

and the衝突 between the haves. Recent history, in the shape of Bolton and Barnsley, and before them a cheaply constructed Sunderland, happily suggests that the have-nots, comparatively speaking, are in with a shout.

Like Bolton's romp to the title, the yo-yo fortunes of Crystal Palace and Leicester demonstrate that the demoted teams have a strong chance of being involved in the shake-up next spring. Encouraging as that may be to Middlesbrough, however, such clubs have usually held on to their best players.

Boro, having replaced Juninho with Paul Merson, may feel that a squad which reached two Wembley finals should be good enough to bounce back up. But uncertainty over the commitment of Fabrizio Ravanelli and other major earners casts a cloud over the Riverside.

Even though even David Platt's arrival might not dispel. Their exit might improve the dressing-room spirit; it would also leave Bryan Robson short of strength.

Sunderland, who retain most of the personnel Peter Reid led to the title 18 months ago, may be a better bet. Reid is still buying in dribs and drabs, but

there is more cohesive feel about them than with Boro. The filip of playing in the new Stadium of Light should ensure an relegation hangover.

Nottingham Forest have been busy reinventing themselves under Dave Bassett. Stuart Pearce has gone, but enough of the younger mainstays remain to form the backbone of a side bolstered by some impressive recruitment at home and abroad.

Frank Clark, in charge at Forest until December, effected a heartening recovery at Manchester City. Georgi Kintzle is still there, crucially, and in the likes of Lee Bradbury, Clark's goalscoring ex-squadron from Portsmouth, the supporting cast looks considerably improved.

Pompey, meanwhile, are trusting in Terry Venables' Australian connections to offset such sales, a strategy with no obvious precedent for success.

Wolves, too, have been conspicuous by their inactivity in the transfer market, with Steve Sedgley and Mirka Paatelaainen the only buys.

The chest-beating of Wolves'

owner, Sir Jack Hayward, after their play-off defeat was understandable, if a trifle over the top. In the context of a staggering run of injuries, third place was commendable. More over, Mark McGhee did his best work on a tight budget at Reading.

Queen's Park Rangers have not only held on to Trevor Sinclair but acquired a proven 20-goal man, Mike Sheron, for £2.5m from Stoke. Rangers still look frail defensively, surprisingly for a side coached by Stewart Houston and Bruce Rioch, but should be fun to watch.

By bringing Brian Deane

home from Leeds, Sheffield United found the ideal antidote to the gloom over Howard Kendall's walk-out. A sound managerial appointment – Lou Macari? – should find them pressing into the play-off zone again. It is less easy to be optimistic about Ipswich, where George Burley is again having to wheel and deal.

No Birmingham appear

any more likely to make the breakthrough. After the re-volving-door policy of the Barry Era, Trevor Francis has

not been able to bring in

enough of the better-quality

players demanded by David Sullivan and his co-owners.

The chances of anyone doing a Barnsley must, in truth, be slender. Crewe and Port Vale espouse similar values but do not have the strength in depth. Stoke, who have a new manager in Chic Bates, a new ground and a useful replacement for Sheron in Peter Thorne, from Swindon, may be a better bet.

Bradford City, where Chris Kamara rebuilt a prematurely promoted team just in time to stave off the drop in May, may also be a surprise packet if they can sustain the momentum.

RESULTS FOR

WOMEN

RESULTS FOR

JULY 150

sport

Gunnell waves her final goodbye

Mike Rowbottom
in Athens on the
retirement of two
great Britons

Sally Gunnell, Britain's most successful female athlete of all time, yesterday announced her retirement from the sport.

The 31-year-old British team captain, who pulled out of the World Championships here on Wednesday because of injury, took her decision during a phone call with her husband, Jon Bigg, on Wednesday night.

Her statement followed Tessa Sanderson's confirmation that, having failed to qualify for Saturday's javelin final, she was ending her career at the age of 41.

Thus, in the space of three hours, British athletics had said goodbye to two of its greatest female competitors.

Gunnell – who in 1994 held a grand slam of Olympic, world, Commonwealth and European titles – said she simply cannot face going on after three consecutive years of injury problems.

She was unable to defend her world 400 metres hurdles title in 1995, and was carried from the Olympic track in tears last year after breaking down in her semi-final.

"I always said after Atlanta, didn't I, that if I was injured any more I would call it a day. The luck had run out," she said yesterday, her left calf heavily strapped.

"When I spoke to Jon, I had made my mind up before I put down the phone. He's always said the decision was up to me and he would support me whatever I did. But I think he felt he couldn't go through it one more time."

"When I first told him I had got another injury, he was very frustrated. He was the one who was swearing, and saying he couldn't believe it had happened to me again."



Sally Gunnell announces her retirement yesterday: 'In some ways I feel a little bit of relief'

Photograph: Mike Egerton/Empics

Having won her opening

400m hurdles heat in 54.54sec,

her best time of the year, Gunnell became aware of a problem in her left calf. "I thought as I walked off, 'What's going on here? I don't deserve this.'

"In some ways now I feel a little bit of a relief. Everyone has been asking me when I was going to call it a day, and I worried whether it would be obvious to me. But it's time to call it a day."

"I slept on my decision overnight because I wanted to make sure I wasn't going to turn

round in six months' time and say, 'Oh, hi everybody, I'm going to come back.'

"In the bar the other night, Steve Smith and Allison Curthie and some of the others were saying, 'You can't retire. You've got to come with us to the Commonwealths and Europeans next year.'

Unlike Linford Christie, she will not continue to compete in club athletics after putting an end to her international career.

"No," she said. "End of story. The thought of going out and doing another winter's training after this... I couldn't do it."

Gunnell hopes to be fit in

time for farewell appearances

at Crystal Palace on 17 August and Gateshead on 7 September.

After that, Gunnell will have

other things on her mind. "The pressure's all on Jon now," she said with a grin. "He's got to support me and get me pregnant."

Unlike Linford Christie, she will not continue to compete in club athletics after putting an end to her international career.

"No," she said. "End of story. The thought of going out and doing another winter's training after this... I couldn't do it."

Sanderson was equally

adamant that she would not be tempted to prolong a career which has earned her Olympic and Commonwealth titles. The suggestion that she might try to improve on her record of being first British Olympian to appear in six Games brought a gust of laughter.

"That's it," she said. "That's the end of it."

Her effort of 57.84m missed

qualifying by just over three metres. "When I picked up the javelin for my last throw, I felt

really choked, but I didn't want

to cry. When I saw the British supporters afterwards, they were still saying well done and thanks for everything, that's when I felt tearful."

Her mood was altered when she was called for a routine doping test – the last of a 23-year international career. Characteristically, she was able to see the fun of it.

"I thought, 'Give me a break. I'm 41 years old – where am I running to?' Even when I sat on the toilet I was thinking, 'Here we go. One last dip'."

Naked ambition runs wild in the country

Australian Rules

Peter Schiltz, player-coach of the Bunyip country team in Victoria, has been trying hard to find the reason for his team's losing streak. He has not found it yet, but he has changed his training methods in a novel way: his team have been working out in the nude.

After a run of defeats Schiltz made the team strip off in 2C weather. The player-coach had been disappointed after his fourth-placed team lost to fifth-placed Hepburn.

"Something needed to be done to lift our spirits and liven up training," Schiltz said. Sadly, the tactic failed. Bunyip lost its next game against top-of-the-table Hepburn.

"I was looking for a bit of inspiration," Schiltz said. "It was a spur of the moment decision."

RESULTS FROM WORLD ATHLETICS

Men

200 metres semi-finals (heat 4 in each heat to final; heat 1, fastest speed = 0.50sec; 1st = 2nd, 2nd = 3rd, 3rd = 4th, 4th = 5th, 5th = 6th, 6th = 7th, 7th = 8th, 8th = 9th, 9th = 10th, 10th = 11th, 11th = 12th, 12th = 13th, 13th = 14th, 14th = 15th, 15th = 16th, 16th = 17th, 17th = 18th, 18th = 19th, 19th = 20th, 20th = 21st, 21st = 22nd, 22nd = 23rd, 23rd = 24th, 24th = 25th, 25th = 26th, 26th = 27th, 27th = 28th, 28th = 29th, 29th = 30th, 30th = 31st, 31st = 32nd, 32nd = 33rd, 33rd = 34th, 34th = 35th, 35th = 36th, 36th = 37th, 37th = 38th, 38th = 39th, 39th = 40th, 40th = 41st, 41st = 42nd, 42nd = 43rd, 43rd = 44th, 44th = 45th, 45th = 46th, 46th = 47th, 47th = 48th, 48th = 49th, 49th = 50th, 50th = 51st, 51st = 52nd, 52nd = 53rd, 53rd = 54th, 54th = 55th, 55th = 56th, 56th = 57th, 57th = 58th, 58th = 59th, 59th = 60th, 60th = 61st, 61st = 62nd, 62nd = 63rd, 63rd = 64th, 64th = 65th, 65th = 66th, 66th = 67th, 67th = 68th, 68th = 69th, 69th = 70th, 70th = 71st, 71st = 72nd, 72nd = 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Beyond the Premier
Phil Shaw on prospects in the
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sport

Jackson adds to Britain's collection of silver

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM
reports from Athens

Colin Jackson, who did not figure in most people's predictions for British medals at these World Championships, recaptured the kind of form which took him to the 1993 title last night as earned silver behind the defending world and Olympic champion, Allen Johnson.

Jackson had reached the final as the fastest qualifier. There have been some major

championships, notably the 1992 Olympics, where he has failed to deliver in the final, but on this occasion he dug deep from his physical and mental reserves to challenge the champion all the way to the line.

The American won in 12.93sec, 0.02sec slower than the world record Jackson set in winning that title four years ago. Jackson clocked 13.05, by far his best of the season. He thus brought Britain's medal tally at these championships to three silvers.

Jackson has not won a medal at a major championships since 1994, when he took Commonwealth and European gold. At that point, even though he had failed to win the Olympic title, he was unquestionably the finest sprint hurdler in the world. A series of injuries over recent years, and a bitter feud with the British Athletic Federation have diminished his effectiveness.

Jackson has come through to establish himself as the event's No 1. He remains that, but Jackson can take huge satisfaction in his performance.

Britain's misfortune with illness and injury continued yes-

terday when it was revealed that Richard Nurkic was a doubtful starter in Sunday's marathon because of a viral complaint.

It is a hugely unfortunate turn of events for a runner whose dedication has brought him a highly consistent record in major championships. What is more, Nurkic has shown he can perform in the hot and humid conditions which the runners will have to endure in Sunday's route from Marathon itself to Athens. He finished fifth in last

year's Olympics and seventh in the 1995 World Championships.

Earlier in the day, Ukraine's world shot put champion, Aleksandr Bagach, was stripped of his gold medal and \$60,000 (£38,000) prize-money after the second doping offence of his career.

Bagach, the Olympic bronze medallist, tested positive

for a banned stimulant,

epedrine, which would have entailed a three-month ban before the International Amateur Athletic Federation altered their

rules shortly before these championships.

Thus, the 30-year-old Ukrainian, who served a two-year ban after his test showed excessive testosterone at the European Cup in Gateshead eight years ago, got off with a public warning.

Bagach, who equalled his personal best of 21.47m in Sunday's final, said afterwards he could not believe his performance.

John Godina, of the United States, who took part here on a wild card entry as the defending champion, was promoted to the gold medal position. Oliver

Sven-Buder of Germany took silver, and another American, C J Hunter, fiancée of the new world 100m champion Marion Jones, received the bronze.

Greeks bearing gifts came to the hotel door of Britain's javelin silver medallist Steve Backley yesterday, delivering a box of women's lingerie and what he described as "date mail". After securing his medal with a final throw which demoted Kostas Gatsios, the vociferously supported home thrower, to bronze medal position, Backley said: "I was delighted to stuff the Greek."

In response, Backley was sent a letter offering best wishes for him to win gold in the women's javelin. "At this final, you can win a medal, it suits you. And then Go Home. There you may watch the videotape where thousands of Greek fans applaud you when you receive the silver medal. And don't come back. Honestly, we won't miss you."

Backley took the reproof in good heart. "I'm keeping the letter as a memento. I'm going to frame it and keep it in the toilet." He didn't say what he was planning to do with the lingerie.

FIFTH TEST: Taylor takes control on an easy pitch to dash Atherton's hopes of regaining Ashes

Series in sight with England flat out of luck

DEREK PRINGLE

reports from Trent Bridge

Australia 302-3 v England

Dame Fortune can be a harsh mistress. So when Michael Atherton lost his fifth consecutive toss of the series he knew his team would be consigned to a long, hot and fairly fruitless day in the field. On the flattest Test pitch of the summer, and with their first day score nestling nicely on 302-3, Australia are resolutely in charge of this match. With a huge total in prospect, and England having the disadvantage of batting last against Shane Warne, the Ashes, if not quite the series, are as good as Australia bound.

If it was not quite as tortuous as the first day here eight years ago, when Michael Atherton made their Test debuts. On that occasion, Mark Taylor scored 219 and England went wicketless for a whole day. But although Taylor made only 76, and was one of three wickets to fall, the cycle of supremacy is still no closer to being broken.

For Taylor a satisfying day was crowned when he neatly glided Robert Croft for a leg-side four. By taking his score from 60 to 64, he became only the sixth Australian to pass 600 Test runs, joining an elite band headed by Allan Border and including Don Bradman, Greg Chappell, David Boon and Neil Harvey.

Taylor has been a fine servant as both batsman and captain and is a popular figure with both players and public alike. But although his recent struggle with form and fitness have been well documented – he was bowled by a beauty from Andy Caddick yesterday – he has not allowed it to detract from the important business of winning Test series. Should Australia prevail here, it

will be his seventh winning series as captain, a record most modern captains would kill for.

Poor England. They huffed and they puffed, but despite some generous swing for most of the day, they could not blow the opposition down. But if this was the game in which to gamble everything, the biggest puzzle, was why – after a summer of playing on result pitches – a bland shirt front was produced for this, the most crucial match of the series?

Inconsistency has probably been England's biggest problem over the last decade. Judging by the nature of the surface here, it is clearly not one limited to playing performance alone and the groundstaff and their masters have obviously not had their Walkmans recently tuned to "Land Of Hope and Glory". Indeed, had England's predicament here been faced by either South Africa or New Zealand, there would have been no question that the pitch would have provided a result, one way or the other, in under four days.

The conditions permitting, it was not an unimpressive bowling performance, and both Dean Headley and Andrew Caddick perhaps deserved better reward than their single-wicket haul. Mind you, as perfectionists might reason, four-day cricket was brought in specifically to prepare English bowlers for such occasions. Judging by the way Australia's top four each made fifties, the benefits of four-day cricket has yet to kick in. Which is why this pitch, despite the Australian complaints at Headley, should have been prepared to offer far more than it did. In fact the only lateral movement achieved by England's bowlers, was when their shirt sleeves were used to wipe their hot and bothered brows.

Apart from a few sticky moments during Headley's new ball spell, Taylor and Matthew Elliott found little to prevent them from posting their second hundred partnership of the series. It was only when Headley won a contentious appeal for an inside edge against Elliott, who had scored 69, that England got into the game.

With Phil Tufnell again missing out for the fifth time this summer – the England Cricket Board probably has a standing order with him for the 12th man's fee – the inclusion of both Hohlieke brothers, especially Ben, was always going to be a gamble, albeit one worth trying.

If the burden of expectation weighed heavily on either, it did not show. In fact Ben, clearly intending to enjoy the experience, was all smiles. He may not be your usual self-conscious 19-year-old, but a pocketful of sweets, popped into his mouth at regular intervals during the afternoon, betrayed his teenager status.

But if their early spells were undistinguished, at 5.45pm, a little bit of history was created as the pair bowled in tandem. It was a juxtaposition that proved fruitful too, with Ben claiming Greg Blewett as his maiden Test wicket.

Batting serenely, Blewett, who had just reached his fifty, edged a cut shot to Alex Stewart who obliged his young Surrey team-mate by bringing off a superb one-handed catch.

It was the last stuff England got as "the Nugget" (Steve Waugh) combined with "the Natural" (twin brother Mark) to steer Australia past three hundred. With Mark, unbeaten on 60 and long overdue a big score, the omens do not look good. With his brother still there to keep him company today, England may yet have to wait another day to get to the crease. If that happens, then it will be sackcloth without the Ashes coming their way.

Henry Blofeld, page 24



Mark Taylor, the Australian captain, goes on the attack during his innings of 76 in the fifth Test at Trent Bridge yesterday
Photograph: David Ashdown

Platt set to join Merson at Boro

Football

RUPERT METCALF

The clear-out of Englishmen from Highbury is, it seems, continuing, as David Platt contemplates life in the Nationwide League with Middlesbrough.

Arsenal yesterday gave Platt, a former England captain, permission to negotiate personal terms for a move to the Riverside stadium. However, Arsene Wenger, the Gunners' manager, has denied claims by his Boro counterpart, Bryan Robson, that a £2m deal has already been agreed between the clubs.

Robson said he had settled a £1.5m fee for the 31-year-old, with Arsenal receiving a £500,000 after Platt had played a set number of games, and that Platt has only to agree personal terms now.

However, Wenger, who last month shocked Arsenal fans by selling Paul Merson to Boro for £4.5m, said: "Nothing has happened yet. There is no fee agreed. There has been contact between us about David Platt, but certainly no agreement so far."

Platt said: "I became aware of Middlesbrough's interest last night and this afternoon spoke on the telephone with Bryan Robson. From the days when I cleaned my boots at Old Trafford I have always had the greatest respect for Bryan. However, I am undecided at this point in time and want to think things over for a few days before making a decision."

Robson is not worried that

Platt is moving towards the end of his career. "I won lots of medals from the age of 32. There is absolutely no problem with players going on to play at the age of 35," he said. "He can also speak Italian and that will be a great help to me with explaining tactics to Fabrizio Ranavelli and Gianni Festa."

Or his way into Highbury is the 22-year-old Liberian striker Christopher Wreh, who should complete a move from Wenger's former club, Monaco, today. Wreh, a cousin of Milan's George Weah, has been training with the Gunners for weeks while his contract with the French club was settled.

Compensation of about £300,000 will be paid to Monaco.

Leicester City have made a £500,000 bid for the former Everton and West Ham striker Tony Cottee, who is keen to return to England after a spell in Malaysia, and have agreed a £1.1m fee with Blackburn for Graham Fenton, also a striker.

Derby County have completed the £1m signing of the Portsmouth forward Dean Burton, with an extra £500,000 payable depending on appearances.

Everton are talking terms with the Chilean striker Fernando Vergara, who has just spent a week on trial with Crystal Palace. Aston Villa have signed West Bromwich Albion's goalkeeper Paul Crichton on a one-month deal as cover for the injured Australian, Mark Bosnich, who pulled a hamstring in a friendly at The Hawthorns last week.

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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3372 Friday 8 August

By Phil Thursday's solution

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ACROSS

- Hold back regressive American festival (4)
- Praising one-third of Europe's reduced strategy (10)
- Shakespearian character in yarn by Lamb? (8)
- Addicted drinker attending church, looking very pale (6)
- Unacceptable conclusion leads to insult (6)
- One Member is working to hold leader of robbers in jail (8)
- He acted with troupe, performing in stage spectacle (4,2,7)
- Force TUC to realign in unusual breach (3)
- Former wife to suggest splash coverage in the
- press (6)
- Talk is a fine thing for an audience (6)
- Born in straitened circumstances, taken in by rising priest – that's uncommon (8)
- Lots of water in jar, we hear – various shades (5,5)
- Indication of affection never found between opposing sides in scrapping (4)
- DOWN
- Cliff A Rowe, working copper (3,7)
- Name found in Meath and Leinster (6)
- Unobserved, South avoided receiving first of cards (8)
- It's responsible for holding up some of your breakfast (3-3)
- Modified Space-time is not realistic (8)
- Male wearing headpiece of kinky fur (4)
- Guess nocturnal paratroopers will do (4, 2, 3, 4)
- When everyone shoots down what first of productions will do? (4, 6)
- Symbol of America unpleasantly masculine? Not? (5, 3)
- Level quality still seen on Loch (8)
- Third of clues this settler will supply such a struggle? (6)
- Hard to support city? Here's smaller administrative unit (6)
- Choice in sides of pink meat (4)

TOMORROW
I think this is a country where I can be successful and enjoy the football. When I see the Italian game it is like chess!
Marc Overmars talks to Glenn Moore about his new career in England with Arsenal

On Monday
Alex Ferguson talks exclusively to The Independent in the Monday Interview.